



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



AL 2358.1.2.50



**HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY**



As she offered me her hand, she lifted up her face to mine.

A SPECIAL EDITION LIMITED

PEGGY O'NEAL

BY

ALFRED HENRY LEWIS

AUTHOR OF "WOLFFVILLE," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY HUTT

THE PEOPLE'S LIBRARY

Issued Monthly

By THE AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY

NEW YORK

THE AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY

PUBLISHERS' AGENTS

39-41 CHAMBERS STREET

AL 2358.1.2.50

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
SHELDON FUND
JULY 10, 1940

Copyright, 1902, by A. J. DREXEL BIDDLE
PUBLISHED, MAY, 1908

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL, LONDON

Peggy O'Neal

1591
84

C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Lustrous Peg O'Neal . . .	13
II. Port Wine Duff and Pigeon-Breast	45
III. Peg's Meeting with the Major . .	71
IV. The Jew and His Spanish Sword .	107
V. The Rev. Campbell and The Mag- pie	135
VI. The Storm Gathers Against Peg .	161
VII. The Secretary, Suave as Cream .	193
VIII. The Mad Capricious Peg . . .	224
IX. The General Selects His Successor	259
X. The Major and Peg at Crosses . .	292
XI. The General Makes Proverbs . .	325
XII. How Peg Would Wear the Coral .	356
XIII. The Son of the Spanish Bull-Fighter	392
XIV. The Federal Union: It Must be Preserved	422
XV. How Peg was Saved from Peg . .	454
XVI. Love's Funeral in the Snow . . .	477

I L L U S T R A T I O N S

	PAGE.
Peggy O'Neal	<i>Frontispiece</i>
As she offered me her hand, she lifted up her face to mine.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Noah ripped up his foe's arm from wrist to shoulder.	131
"And you shall have a collar."	212
She arose, careless and contained, as though she had not observed me. . . .	307



PREFACE

Doubtless I shall tell this tale but poorly, since I have no skill of writing or rhetoric and must, for the most part, proceed by blunt sentences and short one-syllable words to the end that I be understood. This record is worth while, I think, for it exhibits the growth of favor for the Union within the General's breast; and to be corollary thereunto, his wrath against States Rights as a doctrine, together with a hatred of Calhoun, its champion, and what other folk were found to uphold the Vice-President's hands in those ill courses of nullification and separation and secession he laid down for national misguidance.

I myself had been with the General, war and peace, for thirty years on end. He was like an elder brother to me, and I apprehended no man better. And knowing him thus well—having his thought and feeling and emotion of politics at my mental fingerends—it is in my strong belief that not until he came and made oath as chief magistrate, did he conclude his position touching this claim of right on a state's part to nullify general law and strike

her name from the roll of our common sisterhood. I was with him, I say, when the seed of the General's determination to stand for a union, one and indivisible, was planted; and I witnessed its quick upgrowing and broadening until it sheltered and shadowed with wide safety the very integrity of the country. We had arrived at a fork in the road; the ways were about to part. Calhoun would have led us to the left where no man could be sure of national continuance over night. But the General ruled; he was for the right hand. By his iron courage, and the brisk, white clearness of his mental lights, the General was to triumph. As descendant of such victory the States were to be unified and secession beaten down. Nor shall that hour find its morning in all time when the mighty excellences of the General's labors are not to have their evidence, and the tree he planted bear into the hands of men its fruits upon the earth. He was a tremendous mechanic of state, was General Jackson; and the world in its construction will wear his hammer-marks with those of Cromwell and Napoleon while the ages keep to their procession.

And yet, as may the Amazon have ultimate well-head in some rivulet as thin as a thread, or a spring so little that a gourd might

serve for its exhaustion, so did the General come to select his place in this business of upholding the Union against those who would pull it down, as incident to bucklering a woman—poor and slight and feeble, she was; the beautiful Peg O'Neall—who for her loveliness was envied and for her goodness was hated and for her origin as a tavern-keeper's daughter was contemned by those proud folk who named themselves the nation's court of fashion.

The General was a sentimentalist; justice and to do right were with him instincts, and came not as grist ground coldly in the mills of calculated selfishness and reason. Scotch-Irish he was in his strain; but more Irish than the Irish and more Scotch than the Scotch, he in a manner wonderful could in the same moment be cool and warm, and cautious and headlong, and prudent and reckless, and close and frank—at once a Fabius and a Scipio. In a glow of sentiment made molten hot by the recent death of his wife—to him the Goddess of his worship—the General would extend the power of his place and name to be a refuge for the tearful, beautiful Peg, whom, as a child, his wife had known and loved, and whom he now found evilly crushed beneath the social wheel. And in a rush of feeling he rescues her and sets her high among the highest. Still, while

it owns its hot inception to impulse wholly Irish, this rescue; the carrying out thereof, when now the General goes about it, turns to be all Scotch in the cautious yet indomitable character of its execution.

Also, for that the General is ardent and prone to mix private passion with his public thought, he arrives at a hatred of nullification, finding it a prime principle among those enemies whom he faces for the sake of poor Peg O'Neal. It is the great fire kindled of a small thing, this, the General's war to sustain the Union against ones who already searched for its life. He rides into the lists for a woman's name, and all unknowingly he bears the country's future on the point of his spear. And so comes this story; to the purpose and the hope that what in this good way the General did, and why and how he did it, may not die and disappear upon the memories of men.

PEGGY O'NEAL

CHAPTER I

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

It was my fate, I will not say my misfortune—being too proud—to dwell overmuch with camps and caucuses and transact more than stood best for me of politics and war. These were my schools, and they sadly served to make me coarse and turn me hard. Sometimes I think this pity, for I was conceived, you are to notice, with no scanty promise of fineness to my fiber.

Now I am moved to remember, and I might add almost to regret these things, because I would like much at this pinch to color for you a right picture of the fair, innocent, unfortunate Peg O'Neal. Yet how am I to do this?—I, loaded of a sluggish fancy and a genius without touch! I am no Apelles to paint an Aphrodite, no Phidias to carve a

Venus; and for that matter, Peg no Phryne to be model for such art. The best I might draw would stand crude and cornerwise, since I own only to talents whereof the graphic character is exhausted when they have laid out a worm fence.

It is within the rim of the possible that you may feel for me, born as I show you with the hands of all good power of description bound close and fast by my sides. Perhaps, too, you yourself on occasion have been stung of high impulse and fain would soar with a poem; and then, when you stretched for flight, found no furnishment of wings. Most folk have been thus crowded upon by exaltations, and were prey to thoughts for the expression of which their lisping natures lacked facility. They had the sinew but not the soul. There was verse in them, but with it no presentation dress of word or ornament of rhyme. They caged a tune of music in their hearts and failed of those notes asked for to announce its melody.

Still, our Peg, for whom we toiled—the General and I—and intrigued and made new friendships and broke old ones, and who was in her fortunes the beginning of policies on the General's part so lasting in importance to the State, shall not go untold. I must make

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

what effort lies in me to give some notion of a beauty that claimed so much of potency in equations of government solved of our times.

For myself, and I take no shame for it, I say freely that of the charges laid against her by common tongue, I was convinced of her innocence by the mere beauty of her face, just as the loveliness of that Greek girl aforetime convinced the judges and wrought a verdict in her favor. There be flowers so purely beautiful as to refuse and refute a stain; and such a blossom was the lustrous Peg O'Neal.

I was first to meet with her at this time; and while I had not condemned her in my thoughts—to condemn a woman is, for a man, the coward part!—if I found myself possessed of views at all, they leaned to her disfavor. I knew the General regarded Peg as a white soul suffering wrong; but I also knew the General to be mercurial, and a blindly passionate recruit when once enlisted. Besides, his own wife had been throughout her life—and she most virtuous!—so lashed of slander, that his blood was ever up and about the defence of any whose wailing wrongs resembled her's. The General's attitudes were never the offshoots of cold wisdom; he was one who believed the worst of a foe so soon as it was told, and the best of a friend before ever it

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

Gen'ral would gwine say to sech cat-an'-fiddle doin's?"

"And now what's wrong?" I inquired; humbly enough, for I was much beneath Jim's sway.

"Marse Major, lemme ask you," said Jim, and with that he fixed me with his old eye like an inquisitor; "lemme ask you: Does you-all send for to meet a young lady?"

"Certainly not," I replied. "Do you think I've come to Washington to meet young ladies?" This last indignantly.

"How I know what you do?" retorted Jim, sullenly. "Ever see a hoss in a new pars-tur'? Ever see how he r'ar an' pitch an' buck-jump an' kick up? How I know what you do?"

"Get to the point," I said, and I drew on a fierce expression, for I was running low of patience.

"No use, Marse Major, for you to go dom'neerin' with Jim," and the scoundrel shook his head admonishingly. "I'll fotch up at d' p'int fas' enough. I tells dese yere niggahs about dis hotel that if any one comes squanderin' 'round to see you-all, an' speshul, if any of them evil-minded women-folks comes 'round, to let me know."

"What do you mean with your evil-minded women-folks?"

"That's all right, Marse Major; Jim aint heer'n d' Bible read for mighty likely sixty years an' not know of them evil-minded women-folks. King Solomon, an' him d' wisest man, was mingled up in d' midst of a whole passel of 'em. An' so, when a minute back one of d' house niggahs comes up to me an' lets on thar's a young lady in d' parlor who's waitin' for you, I allows I'll take a look, an' try an' rummage out what she wants. With that, I kinder loiters into d' parlor like I'm sent a urrent; an' sho! Marse Major, if thar don't sot a girl who's that beautiful she's plumb reedie'lous.

"Be you-all wantin' to meet d' Marse Major?" I says.

"She say, 'Yes; I'm d' wife of his friend, Mr. Eaton.'

"Mr. Eaton,' I says, 'who lives down south of Nashville at Franklin Co't House?'

"She say, 'Yes; I'm Mrs. Eaton.'

"Course I knows dish yere aint so. An' I'm partic'lar skeered about you, besides, since she's so handsome. It's d' beautiful ones makes all d' trouble; a homely woman aint no more harm than squinch owls, that's Jim's sperience. But nacherally, Marse Major, I don't tell dish yere girl she's lyin'; I'm too well brought up. So I says:

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

"I've knowed Mr. Eaton since befo' d' las' wah with d' British what Marse Gen'ral done whups at Noo Aw-leans; Mr. Eaton's a kin to my Marse Major. I've been down by his place a hun'red times at Franklin; an' you hyar me, honey! they aint been no mention about you bein' his wife in Tennessee."

"She smile a bit at this—she's seemin' a trifle sad like—an' says: 'Mr. Eaton an' me, we get married only 'bout a month ago in Wash'ton.' An' so she tell me ag'in to go fotch you; an' arter sort o' hesitatin' 'round between a balk an' a break-down for a while, settlin' on d' properest move, I reckons mebbe I'd better come an' tell you arter all."

"It's as well you did," I said, turning back to the General's door.

"That's all right, Marse Major." Jim called this after me in severe tones. "I'm boun' I'm gwine look arter you-all jes' d' same." Then in a wheedling voice: "Say, Marse Major, would you-all mind if I he'ps myse'f to a dram outen d' demijohn in your closet? What with all dish yere talkin' an' frettin' about you, Jim's mouth is as dry as a kivered bridge."

"One, mind you; no more."

The General, in converse with a caller, was considering Van Buren and party lines

and issues in New York. I would have told him of Peg, and that I was about to see her, but the presence of his visitor put it out of reach. On the whole, I decided, it would be as well to meet Peg first and tell the General later. I interrupted, and explained that I was going to the parlors for a moment; we would get to his letters on my return.

"No hurry, Major, no hurry," he replied; "I'm quite content to put them off. I am already seized on by the spirit of laziness that pervades this place, and which caused Randolph to say: 'I never wind my watch whilst in Washington, as I feel that all time spent here is wasted and thrown away.' It's not quite that bad, perhaps; still, we'll willingly put off the letters until to-morrow."

And now, since I am to tell you of Peg, I would that I possessed somewhat the art of petticoats—a little polite skill for flounce and farthingale—some shadow of a parlor or a boudoir grace.

Peg, then, was the truth itself for height and mould, and her pretty hands and feet told of no tavern in their genesis, even though the lip of envy did. I give you my first impression of her, earned eye to eye and ear to voice. I say the latter because her voice was as honey and wove conviction like a spell. She had

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

your pansy face; a face regular and ineffably good. And how any, even a woman and a rival, might look her deep eyes through and doubt her, masters conjecture! Peg's hair—hanging in long curls about her neck and shoulders—was black; fine as silk or cobwebs; black, yet with the gold-black of the black Saxon. And her skin was snow and peach-blow. There was meditation, too, in her wide brow; and her mouth, with teeth like milk, was both firm and loving. Also, there was that in her atmosphere to bring brave men to her. It was upon one in a moment that Peg, while tender to be hurt, was hard to conquer; sensitive, she would feel her fate; yet she would face it—face it with the faithful courage of an angel. But I'll have done; why furnish the fragments and queer splinters of a portrait I'm too inaptly dull to offer as a whole!

Peg O'Neal came this day, and making herself known, gave me my first sight of her in the drawing room of the Indian Queen. There was a look about her, lonely, bitter and pathetic; a look that should belong with one hunted, and who waits to be made sure of her friends. She gave me her hand; white and soft and small and yielding—it was as though I took hold on a lily. My heart went out to her before she spoke; as I've confessed, I was

warm for her cause on the instant I saw her. Peg had read the cabinet list in the paper. I think, too, she foresaw the woe and worry, to become the tail of it more clearly than did either the General or myself, or even the poor wine Duff Green. It was of that she desired to talk; she would see the General; but first she would see me.

This preference for myself before the General was a common custom into which Peg readily stepped. All who knew the General, knew me for his other self; and I will say, despite the inference of a boast, knew me for his calmer and more prudent self.

Peg did not come to me until the afternoon, and before I go to the story of our converse it would be as well to sketch a handful of incidents which preceded her advent and which should be understood to teach one the whole truth of this tale.

This Washington day I have on my mind's edge, being the one next before the day Peg came to me, was the fourteenth of February, St. Valentine's Day, albeit the latter has nothing of part herein. We had arrived, the General and myself, on the tenth, and housed at the Indian Queen. This tavern was not the tavern of old, when that O'Neal who was Peg's father prevailed as master; yet even

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

under new control—and with a born conservative like myself, the new is ever the defective—it was a first hostel of the capital.

Our advent discovered a crust of ice and snow to our feet, and a mortal sharpness in the air that was like a tonic. During those three or four days since our coming, a thaw had befallen which left thoroughfares a discouraging swale of mire, and made going about a foulest possible employ. Withal, as though sponsor for the softening temperature, there descended a fog—fairly a hash of misty rain that one might wash one's face in—and the air was as full of water as a sponge.

These were no true conditions for the General, with lungs never the hardiest, and whose health was more than commonly broken by the blow of his wife's death. She was soundly, deeply sleeping in her grave in Tennessee, and the new sods above her counted but twelve weeks for their age, when we rode into Washington. She had heard the guns and the music which told of her hero's triumph; and then, heart-stricken of shafts of slander aimed against her sinlessness by an opposition willing to conquer with black means, she bowed her gentle head and passed. She was not to multiply a White House honor by sharing it, and left her lover-husband to go

his presidential way alone unlighted of her eyes.

Those dark scenes at the Hermitage when the General's angel went from us, and storms of grief—so utter, so beyond repair!—fair beat upon him to a point which all but laid him beneath the grass-roots to keep her company, have neither part nor lot in this relation. They may be guessed at, however; and the General came forth of them woe-worn and shaken, and with the thought in his soul that she perished by the venom of his enemies, who had struck at his fortunes by striking at her pure reputation.

After his wife died I had been in the grip of sore concern for the General. He was but a frail man at his best; he carried lead in his shoulder and lead in his side—private bullets stopped in private wars, truly, yet no less perilous for that—and when on these, plus the angry work and wrath of a campaign, was laid this funeral farther load, I say, I trembled for the upcome.

Our way to Washington was to be by the Cumberland and the Ohio to Pittsburg, and then overland through the mountains, and so along the Potomac. All Tennessee seemed come to Nashville when we went aboard; I helping the General—whose weakness was so

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

great he must, despite vanity, lean visibly on my support.

As he sank exhausted into a chair, and the boat backed off the levee, I was in blackness for the gloom I felt. I believed he would not live to see Washington, but fall by the way; I in no sort presupposed those eight tremendous years when the White House would be to the common folk as a temple, with him the idle of their adoration. I could not foresee his mavelous two presidencies, and how, his name brightening with each added sun and followed by every eye, he would retire again to privacy and his Hermitage, the best beloved since the even day of Jefferson.

And now as I talk to you the tears start. He is dead as I write, and gone long ago to join his heart in the grave and lie by the side of his wife; and it comes strangely, even to myself that I, an old man, and held as one hard and practical and cold, should be so moved of retrospection. If it were to remember loss and sadness and decay, such indeed might stand as reason for emotion. But my rearward glances find only the glory of an ever-climbing, sky-kissed high success. Mayhap it is the splendor and white gleam of it to bring the tears, as does the glint of sunshine on the snow.

Yet it half shames my years, these drops

of feeling. And for all that, I well recall how Dale and Overton and Houston and Blair—no meek souls, these!—were as much com moved when claimed of thoughts of General Jackson;—such, for his friends, were the soft and softening spells and powers of the man. The wet eyes of these, stern and rock-hewn, may save me from the stain of doting weakness. But I loiter—I lose time when there is none to lose—a wandering delay is the crime common of old age.

Our journey to Washington was disputed by applause at every foot; the double banks of the Cumberland and the Ohio appeared to have become alike the rendezvous of South and West and North. Bands brayed and “committees” came aboard; a dozen times was the boat tied up and the General borne ashore as on a wave to greet and be greeted by roaring thousands who hailed him their Messiah of politics and one come for their redemption. From the first our progress was hedged and canopied of the never-ceasing shout, “Hurrah! for Jackson!” Night and day it was in our ears, and our very sleep gave way and fled before it.

To say that through this I held no alarm for the General would be but an idle picture of my feelings. Verily! I more than once

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

found my heart in my mouth lest the gusty multitude that struggled and fought to touch his hand should kill him for mere kindness.

And yet he would thrive and be fat upon it, if such word by any padding of hyperbole may be made to fit his slim meagerness. His gray eye would light, his lean cheek show a color, his milky bristle of hair turn more stiffly, jauntily spinous with each of these encounters. When I would remonstrate and cite his sick weakness to forbid, he would shake his head and smile—his closest journey to a laugh. Then he would say:

“Major, you don’t know me! These shoutings are as medicine in wine. These people love me; I take strength from their hands; their applause is my food and I live and grow heavy by it.”

And so this boisterousness of endorsement went on; and the General reveled while I sat sour with terror lest from it he sicken and die, stricken by the very evidences of his popularity. He was right and I was wrong; he came from this general joy, which with every hour arose and laid actual hands upon him, as one remade.

Some pages back I pitched upon the fourteenth as a day much in my mind, and the fourth since we came upon the capital. I

begin narration properly with that day, regarding what has gone before as preliminary and given for a clearer knowledge of that which is to follow as it unfolds.

There were matters to take place upon the fourteenth which served to fix it in my memory. The first was a mishap to the General himself.

For the rain and the mist and the mire we that day found ourselves much confined to the Indian Queen. This might be called no hardship of loneliness since, despite the mud all the world would pull on its boots to visit us. The General, whose dyspepsia was dominant, had eaten only a little rice. This he took at short intervals; yet such dwarf spoonfuls were they, that in the end the aggregate was smallish, and he found himself weakly languid as a reward.

The General had been to a casual reception below to meet official folk—they were building hopes for themselves of what should follow inauguration, still eighteen days away—and being done with them, and uneasy with the weariness of their call, was returning to his room. At the stair's head he stumbled; as he fell he gripped his side and gave a smothered sob of pain.

I, who walked close behind, was well aware

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

of what had chanced. The old Dickenson wound was imperfectly healed, and a sharp wrench would tear it and set it to inward hemorrhage. Swiftly I raised him, and since it was no vast distance down the hall, nor he a mighty burden, carried him to his chamber.

"Call Augustus," he said, his voice pained to a whisper.

Placing a chair I gave him a mouthful of whisky by way of a stimulant. Augustus was the black body-servant who had come with us from the Hermitage. I knew what the summoning of Augustus argued, yet was helpless to interfere. The General when stricken—as he had been many times—in the fashion I have named, was used to open a vein, and so bleed himself comfortably till he felt relief. More than once I had denounced such backwoods surgery as not only dangerous but revolting, and wanting foundations of common sense. There was no logic for it, I said; and it stood for the spirit of the preposterous when one bled internally to bleed one's self externally as remedy. As well might I have spoken with the trees. The General made his stubborn laws and lived them.

"There was a Frenchman," observed the General on some occasion of my remonstrance, "who said that at forty every man was either

a fool or a doctor. Now I am more than forty; and I'm no fool."

Augustus, a tawny, handsome black, arrived in a hurry splendidly promissory of zeal. Being deft of practice, he whipped a bandage sharply tight about the General's arm above the elbow—as starved as a rake-handle, that arm, yet strong as hickory bough! Then the General with his jackknife nicked a vein well down the lower arm, and proceeded to bleed himself most contentedly and liberally, while Augustus held a basin.

Following these horse-leech experiments, for so I scrupled not to brand them, the General, wrapped in a dressing gown, was put to rest upon a sofa. It would have been the bed; but it stood not yet three of the afternoon, and it was a saying of the General's that no man should take to his 'bed by daylight until he came to die. On the lounge, and, as he declared, much uplifted of health, Augustus and I left him, with the whisky easily at hand in event of over-creeping faintness.

After the lapse of an hour I returned. There lay that upon me which, as I saw the future, it was proper enough should be said to the General. And since he was like to oppose my counsel, as folk commonly do what is patent for their peace, sticking as stoutly

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

for the seeds of trouble as though they were indeed the seeds of righteousness, I reckoned aid perhaps from his present weak, low state. He would lack somewhat his vivacity, and might be drawn with less of struggle to my manner of thought.

Thus abode the coil: It was the evening before when the General told me how he would propose Eaton to be his Secretary of War, and asked my view. I had withheld opinion at the time, my caution evoking a dull flare of that heat-lightning of the General's temper, which last commodity was never deeply in abeyance. I would tell him later, I said; and following a rumble of contempt on his part for the sluggishness of my friendship for Eaton—for that gentleman and I for long had been friends—the subject was for the moment at rest. Now was the time ripe to dispute this question with him; so I bethought, as I wended towards his door.

Coming to his chamber I tapped, and then pushed in without wait, as was my wont. The windows were to the west where at this hour the sun should have been; but such was the veil of fog without that the day seemed already spent and sinking into twilight.

The great fire on the hearth—honest, crackling logs to feed it, since the General

would tolerate no less—set the room in a bloom of light that came close to marking the candle that burned at his elbow a profligacy. He had lifted himself from the sofa where Augustus and I placed him, and was seated before a little table. On it, propped against the *Vicar of Wakefield*, a book whereof he never tired, stood a miniature of his wife. Throughout the day he wore this little painting beneath his garments and hung about his neck by a black cord. His wife had given it him in the old days and when their love was new. Each night, when folk pray and con the Bible, he would have this picture before him; and with it her hymn-book to read her favorite songs. This was his devotion—his worship; it was as though he communed with her, his Saint Rachel, on the work of the day and its duties. To the time of his death he did this; and for whatever was good of his performing he would lay it to these conferences, sweet at once and sad, when in the dusk borderlands of day and night he met and talked with the soft shadow of his heart's own.

As I came into the room the General raised his eyes. They were tear-brimmed and he made no shift to hide them.

"Major," he said with trembling lip, gazing the while on the miniature, "she strove

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

to make me a Christian. I gave her my promise to become a Christian. And so I shall when once I'm done with office and back again at home. I would become one now, were it within the domain of what might be. But who is he who could unite politics and Christ? I'm no hypocrite, Major; you know that! You know what a politician is; you know what a Christian should be. No man may be both, Major; no man may be both."

"You are not a politician," I retorted. "You are a president."

This I got off with a gruff air of harshness, not, however, because it drew a true distinction. I sought to call him from his present mood. The General was unusual in so far that a best step towards comforting him was to irritate him. In his breast he loved collision, and might even leave mourning for a war.

"I am a president and not a politician!" This with a gather of scorn. "And pray, when is a president not a politician?"

With a deprecatory gesture I dismissed the point.

"Let that remain," I replied, "as a question wherewith to rack some further moment. I came for another matter." The General turned a keen eye upon me. "You spoke of Eaton for your portfolio of war," I continued.

"Have you considered what objection might lodge against such course?"

"Go on," he said.

"General, I misdoubt the wisdom of the step. I will make my word plain. There is none to be more the friend of Eaton than myself, none to respect him more. But, sir, you are aware of what folk say."

"And what do folk say?" Anger stood red on the brow of the General as a banner is flung from a battlement. "What do folk say?"

"You should consider coolly, General," I went on. Ever cool myself, it was for that the General valued my counsel. "You know this tale as well as I. It has been told me more than once within four days. Light and laughter-loving, the beautiful Peg O'Neal grows up, the daughter of this very tavern that shelters us. She weds Timberlake, the purser. He is here; then he is at sea. The girlish Peg is still a girl. She goes to rout and ball; she is gay and high and does not mope and wear demure half-weeds as good opinion holds one should whose love is on the sea among the storms. There come whisper and nod and innuendo—the pot of Washington scandal, they tell me, is made easily to boil. Then in the Mediterranean Timberlake cuts his throat; and next,

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

as one who makes sure work, leaps overboard into fifty fathoms. The beautiful Peg does not become distinguished for her grief. This, and the throat-cutting, augment talk, and tongues wag doubly. Within the year thereafter, and not two months ago, she and our friend Eaton are wed. Gossip gains a new impulse; heads nod and there are wise leers. I put this to you, General, with a rude coarseness almost ferocious; I do so for a purpose. I put it as your enemies will put it when, should you call Eaton to your cabinet, they seize on the story to your injury. It is not what you and I say or believe; that is not the question. It is what will your enemies tell and the world accept."

While I was talking, the General filled a clay pipe; in tobacco he found calm. Holding the pipe by its long reed stem he strode up and down, puffing cloudily. The red faded on his forehead, but his eyes were agate-hard. I saw it would be Eaton against argument. The General's will was set as hard and fast and cold as arctic ice.

Nor, to be fully honest, was I over-surprised or sensibly cast down; I had fairly foreseen it all. You may question why, then, I made this vigorous head; and Eaton my friend.

It is a proper curiosity. Freely, I am

constrained, as I review the past, to regard myself as sometimes the victim of self-foolery. On this February evening with the General, I make no doubt but I thought I acted wholly for his weal and peace. And yet I was clear before I spoke, how my words would win to no effect, and Eaton for the cabinet it would be. Thus, I now see that my impulse, indubitably, was one wholly of vanity; as the friend privileged to frankness and who—as he said many times and until I consented to the fact myself—more than any other had builded him up to be a president, I would tell my mind, air my gifts of prophecy, and arrange myself for a future wherein the General might say, when the winds blew high, “You saw the tempest coming and you told me.” That, as I now see, was the very conceited, small, cheap reason of my interference; although at the time I in no sort beheld it by that light, but felt somewhat noble and high and as might a loyal friend.

The General for ten full minutes smoked up and down, I silent, and the room otherwise still save for the tick-ticking of the clock. At last he spoke smilingly and off to one side.

“You remember that sagacious doctor who was yesterday called from Baltimore to amend me after my journey? ‘I’ll do anything

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

you say,' I told him, 'save give up coffee and tobacco.' 'Then you'll die,' he retorted, 'since it is coffee and tobacco which are killing you.' 'Then I'll die,' I replied, 'since coffee and tobacco are all that are left worth living for.' He quit the place in a fury of heat, did that doctor."

The General grinned. There was another pause; then he swung back to my Eaton warning, while his face again showed grave and firm.

"Sir, Mrs. Eaton—Peg, as we call her—is as spotless as a star. My wife knew her, loved her." His tone was tender, while his glance sought the miniature where from the table it followed him up and down with its eyes. "Timberlake's habits were unfortunate; his suicide was due to that. There was never a doubt of Peg in his soul; never a question of her conduct. I know this; I do not guess. What!"—here his voice began to rise with choler—"what! are we to guide by nameless slanders? Eaton is my friend, honorable, high of mind, honorably married to the woman he loves! I will not, by anything I do or fail to do, arm villification. Into my cabinet he goes though every bow in hell be bent against it."

Smash! went the General's pipe upon the hearth. It was the manner of the man when

driven of anger. First and last he smashed pipes by the gross.

"That is not the song of it!" I stubbornly protested.

Then I put out what was true; that he should look at this thing from the point of his presidency. There was the public interest; his faith to the public must be dwelt on.

"If there be a faith to the public," he retorted, "there is also a faith to a friend. It is a widest rumor that Eaton is to be of my cabinet. Folk are morally sure of it as much as folk may be of what sits in the antechamber of time. Should he not be named, that fact will be held as an endorsement of these slanders. It will destroy Eaton; worse, it will destroy Peg. Do you counsel that? Must that be done in the name of Public Good?" The General now was speaking in a cold, contained way for all his late pipe-smashing, and you are not to infer, from any verbal force displayed, a shouting anger. Wroth he was; but, nonetheless, low-voiced and steady as with a kind of tranquility of fury. "Must my friend be abased, insulted—must a sweet, true woman suffer harm for that you say a public interest asks it? Sir, you speak folly and propose disgrace. There can be no public good to come from private wrong. And if it were so, still I

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

should stand the same. I've suffered many tests for the public you prate of; I've abode the death-chances of a hundred battles; I've marched to the public's wars when, spent and weak, I must be lifted to the saddle; in no way have I spared or saved myself. But I will spare my friend; I'll save a woman's honor; ay! spare and save them though your public interest perish in their steads. You could name no altar whereon I would make such sacrifices. The honor of a woman—to safeguard her good fame—is the first duty of a man. It is before friendship, before patriotism; it has precedence over things public or private. What you offer spells ruin for a woman—ruin for Peg whom my wife has loved and kissed! I will not do it. I say it again: Eaton for the cabinet it should be though it were the last act of my life. More; if I were capable of beginning my administration with treason to a friend, I might surely look to conclude it with treason to the people."

You are to know that the General made these long orations walking the floor, and in a manner jerky and declamatory, though not loud. There might be spaces of silence between sentences measured by two and three steps; and much of the time his eye left me and he was like one who debates with himself.

I ramble off his utterances somewhat in full; for I not only regard the sentiments expressed as creditable to the General himself, but am disposed to give you the truth of him as one who, while right oftener than most men, and as set for justice as a pair of scales, on this as on every other strong occasion did his thinking with his heart. Also, while he never said the word, it ran in him like a torrent that his wife, were she with him, would shield poor Peg at whatever vital cost; and of itself that was equal to the sweeping down of reasons strong as oak or adamant.

Who was the un-observer to say that familiarity breeds contempt? He went wide of the truth; he should have said that familiarity breeds self-confidence. Now I knew the General—I knew the windings of his thought as one knows his way about a house. Folk called him a hero; he was never so to me. And yet, more than any, I knew him to be even better and braver and broader than was his fame in the worshipping mouths of ones who uplifted him to be a god. No, the General and I neither looked up nor looked down when we dealt with one another; we met ever on level terms. He was president, or shortly would be; but what then? As he himself said, "The presidency is a condition, not an attribute, as

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

it might be a malady or a fortune, an evil or a good. And if I am King are you not Warwick?" This last was his way of phrasing it when, a year or so later, I told him of some overheard amazement concerning the easy, old-shoe terms on which I lived with him.

Such being our attitudes one to the other, the General's oral exaltations—while I identified them for honest and as from his soul's soul—struck on me as more florid than was called for by an interview, private and commonplace, between us two. But it was the nature of him; his surface could be made to toss like some tempest-bitten ocean, while his steady depths were calm. This may explain, if it does not excuse, that while he thus walked about, raging and eloquent, I listened with a bit of impatience, helping myself meanwhile to a mouthful of whisky and filling a pipe of my own.

"Say no more," I observed, having advantage of a pause; "say no more. Eaton you will have it, and Eaton it shall be. But, on the whole, do you call it good to your Peg? Do you call it wise or friendly to put her forth to be the target for every bolt of destruction?"

The General drew over to the fire and sat down. Slowly he poured himself a glass

of spirits, and then as slowly drank it off. For some moments he smoked in silence.

"What with this wrong to my side, Major," he said at last, "and the blood I've let, and all on a pale diet of rice, I fear I'm not strong enough to argue with you. Let us agree, then, that Eaton shall go in as Secretary of War. As for Peg—poor little Peg!—why should she be safer out than in? Moreover, a woman must have her courage as a man has his. She must risk slander as he risks sword, and both must front their enemies." He had gone on with a mighty mildness; now he began to wave his second pipe, and I looked to have it go into the fireplace with every word. "You say that the Eatons will be assailed. Already they are attacked; not for themselves, but for me. They were married in January; none found fault until, with our coming, Eaton's nearness to me was remembered and the whisper of what I would do with him began to run abroad. The Eatons are the victims of my feuds; it is I, through them, who am stabbed at. Sir,"—smash! went the pipe and the General started up—"sir, it is the work of Henry Clay—that creature of bargain and corruption! You know his methods of the past campaign. What lie was too vile to tell? What calumny too gross? Who so innocent as to escape his

THE LUSTROUS PEG O'NEAL

malice? Why, sir! such as Clay and his crew would befoul Gehenna, and Satan himself might shrink aside in shame from their companionship! Who was sure from them and the poison of their mendacity? She died by it"—here he pointed to the miniature. "Even the poor lost grave of my mother was not sacred to such jackals. And now it is the Eatons—now it is the pretty, harmless Peg! So let it be; they will find me ready. If I feel joy for a presidency it is because it clothes my hands for their annihilation."

There was a rap at the door. Augustus opened it and announced: "General Green."

"Duff Green," said the General, as though a new thought occurred. "I think now for once, in a way I shall turn our rotund friend to partial use."

"And how will you compass that miracle?" I spoke rather in scorn than curiosity since I owned to briefest admiration for the General's caller. "It will be a novelty to see your Duff Green of use."

"Why then," returned the General, "the benefit I propose from him is one simple enough. I shall have him, in his paper, give this cabinet list to the public. Once in print the thing is ended—the nails for that cabinet building will be clinched."

"And that is it," cried I, in opposition "Now to my notion it is ever best to hold question of this sort in abeyance until the latest moment. Thereby you preserve for your self room wherein to change your plan."

"One's first aim is the surest," responded the General. "Now I've never known much good to come from this plan-changing of which you talk. Nor do I believe in secrets. One should tell the people their business so soon as ever that business is transacted. More folk are trapped and slain with their own secrets than are saved by them. Besides one has no right to lock a door between the people and their affairs. There go but two keys with government, one for the treasury and the other for the gaol, and every officer from path-master to President should be made to study this lesson of the keys until he can repeat it."

To this lecture I made no retort whether of comment, denial or agreement. These abstractions delighted him; and in this instance I too listened with pleasure, not so much because of the deep-sea wisdom disclosed as for that tranquility of spirit after his tossing anger against Clay, which their utterance would seem to bring him. As it stood the General's high temper had faded and his heat was much cooled away when Duff Green appeared.

CHAPTER II

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

Duff Green was a round, insincere, self-seeking, suave, smooth, porpoise-body of a personage, small of eye, hair age-streaked, a port wine voice, wide mouth, and nose of friendly hue. He had come to town the year before, poor and modest, and bartered himself into possession of the *Telegraph*, a leading journal of the capital. He prospered, and prosperity had swollen him. Nor was he without some tincture of shrewdness; for he owned the wit in the late elections to support the General, and now would wax pompous and come forward because of it. I did not like him, holding him selfish and withal weak; besides, his affable complacency offended me.

The General would defend Duff Green, although I am sure he had his measure from the start. The General, retorting to my charge of selfishness and vanity, would say: "Of course, Duff's selfish; that's why I enjoy him. I like selfish folk; they are easy to understand, easy to start or stop. One has but to bait his trap with their interest and, presto!

there they are in the morning caught sharp and fast for his use. And again, your selfish folk are content with much less than will suffice your disinterested folk who truly love you." This was one of the General's efforts at sarcasm, and delivered with the sly flicker of a smile.

"But the smug vanity of Duff Green!" I would urge. "I could wish you half so tremendous as he deems himself."

"Fie! Major, fie!" would be the reply; "vanity is the powder in the gun, the impulse that sends the bullet home. It is the sails of the ship and the reason of motion to that hull of merit which might make no voyage without. Vanity has won more battles than patriotism; wanting vanity, Cæsar would have crossed no Rubicon, and Napoleon would have begun, not ended, with Waterloo."

This fashion of bicker fell often forth between the General and myself; indeed, we were in frequent disagreement, he being one who, while holding notions of his own wisdom, was withal much imposed against by pretences on the false parts of men whom I saw through as through a ladder; and so I told him.

"Ah! excellent evening, Mr. President! excellent evening, Major—ah!" exclaimed Duff Green, his friendly nose aflame, and port wine

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

tones, satisfied and unctuous. Coming forward, he took first the General's hand and then mine. For all the warmth of his countenance, his hand had the cold feel of a fish, and I did not, myself, insist on its retention beyond the plain limits of politeness. "Excellent evening, Mr. President," he repeated, glowing the while, in anticipation doubtless of public printing to come.

"You are not hard to suit for your evening, Duff," returned the General, whose fault it was to be on terms too common with many unworthy of the honor. "Now, I call this the scandalous evening of a scandalous day. I say 'scandalous' because muddy," explained the General.

In the talk to follow it developed that the purpose of Duff Green's visit was no more noble than to just wring future patronage from the General. Especially did our caller have his watery eye on the governorship of Florida, a post, for its palms and orange groves and flowers and summer seas, and mayhap the social life of St. Augustine—aristocratic, and still on Spanish stilts—much quested; and the reason of a deal of court paid the General by rich ones who, having money, hungered for an opening to its display. Duff Green even suggested, tentatively, the name of a certain

wealthy thick-skull. He said the notable in hand was a prime friend of Calhoun; that his selection would be held vastly a compliment—a flower to his nose, indeed!—by the Vice-President.

“Why, sir!” observed the General, whose familiarity diminished as the place-hunting eagerness of the worthy Duff Green began to gain expression; “why, sir, the man you tell of lacks brains. It cannot be; say no more. We’ll find some safer way to flatter the Vice-President than by periling public service in the hands of a weakling.”

“Weakling!” repeated Duff Green, while the friendly nose began to bleach; “weakling! Mr. President, this gentleman—this friend of Calhoun—is one of our richest people.”

“Why, I believe he did inherit a fortune,” responded the General carelessly; “or perhaps a more proper phrasing would make the fortune inherit him. But that is scant reason why he should mismanage a gravely important trust. The governorship of Florida is not all citron groves and mocking birds; there is responsible work to do; and the territory, I tell you, shall not be wasted by a fool. But cheer up, Duff,”—the visitor was looking blue and the hue of friendship had quite departed his nose—“cheer thou up! Perchance we may yet

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

discover some office wherein your ambitious wittol of wealth—whom the Vice-President loves!—may be great without being dangerous.”

Duff Green was no more urgent on the point of a Florida governorship. He was not so dim but he saw his failure and accepted it with what grace he might.

“I don’t know how the Vice-President may take it!” he murmured at the close.

“As to that,” said the General, and his words fell with a suspicious sharpness, as from one smelling to a threat; “as to that, the Vice-President must sustain himself very patiently. I know those who would hold other conduct on the Vice-President’s part as excessively misplaced. They might even teach the Vice-President a similar conclusion. You should tell him that; since I see you act by his request and as his agent.”

Here the General looked hard at Duff Green. Already I caught a shadow of those jealous differences to come between the General and Calhoun—differences that would seem, for the separation of the White House and the Vice-Presidency, constructed of the Constitution. These offices never have agreed—never have been true friends in any administration. It was the less important in this instance, since,

secretly and unknown to him, Calhoun for over a decade had been the General's enemy. On that February evening which Duff Green so distinguished as "excellent" the General was by no means distant from the fact's discovery.

"You do wrong, Mr. President," faltered Duff Green, his affable nose as pale as paper now, "when you say I am Calhoun's agent. The Vice-President knows nothing of this. It was by accident I became aware of his anxiety touching the Florida governorship. I give you my honor, Mr. President; I give you my honor!"

"Let it pass; it's of no mighty consequence." Then impatiently, "Don't call me 'Mr. President' until I'm President. It will be bad enough after inauguration, I take it."

Here poor Duff Green was visibly disturbed. I said nothing to relieve him. Indeed, I didn't utter a dozen words while he remained; as I've told you, I disliked Duff Green, with his face the color of a violin and his airs of fussy consequence.

"But here, Duff," resumed the General, coming himself to the rescue of our visitor, who might be described as sinking for the third and last time in the deep waters of his own confusion, "here, Duff, is something I much desire you to do. It is a list of the

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

cabinet as I intend its construction on the hocks of my inaugural. There are reasons why it should be printed; the Major"—here he indicated me, and with a dry note in his voice which I understood—"approves the names and thinks they should be given to the public. Get them in the next *Telegraph*. Here, I'll read them." And the General reached for his horn-framed glasses and began from a paper he'd taken from his pocket. "Van Buren, Secretary of State; Ingham, the Treasury; Eaton, for the War Office." I saw Duff Green look sharply up. Somehow, while I found protest in his glance, I could not believe the promised cabinet selection of Eaton unpleasant to him. From that moment I knew him for no well-wisher of the General—to be thus pleased with a prospect of hot water! The General drove ahead: "Branch for the Navy; Berrien for the Department of Justice; and lastly, Barry, Postmaster General. There you have it. New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, and Kentucky; the North, the West, and the South—two each; and none for the Yankee East, since to that hard region where men, to make them smart, are raised on foxes' ears and thistle tops, I owe no debts. There is the list. Let

me see it in print." And the General placed the paper in Duff Green's hands.

The General turned to fill his infallible pipe; he would have it ready to shatter into smithereens should provocation come. Duff Green fingered the folded paper with timid air while the General fished for a coal with the little table tongs. For myself, I said nothing; since it was to be done, it might as well see ink—that cabinet list. As the General straightened his tall, slight form, his tobacco-lighting accomplished, Duff Green, breathing pursily from a dash of trepidation, could not forbear comment.

"I suppose you would like my thoughts on this list?" Duff Green took care to give his supposition the rising turn of query.

"And why do you suppose so?" said the General, his tone something grim.

"Only because I supposed you'd like the thoughts of everybody." Duff Green fawned with his voice in a half-fright. It is ill to pester a lion, being no lion-tamer. "I supposed you'd like the thoughts of everybody," he repeated.

"Quite right!" said the General, pretending return of sunshine. "And what are your thoughts?"

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

"The list will be welcome," he answered, gaining confidence from the General's mollified features; "the list will be welcome save in one particular. The selection for your Secretary of War, Mr. President—"

Here Duff Green came to a stop, utterance wholly at a halt. Nor did I blame him, for now the General gloomed in truly savage sort. The General waved his pipe; but he did not break it. Probably he did not think Duff Green worth a pipe.

"And what of Mr. Eaton?" demanded the General at last.

"It's Mrs. Eaton," gasped the other, while his fear shook him until he quaked like a custard; "it's Mrs. Eaton. Our society will not receive her; that is, our ladies won't. Mr. President, she's a tavern-keeper's daughter—he kept this identical Indian Queen, as you must know. Mrs. Eaton's origin is too low for such station; and besides they say—and—and—Mr. President, really, our ladies won't receive her into society." Duff Green ran visibly aground and could go no further.

"Mark you this, Duff Green," and the General's eyes sparkled, while he kept his voice in hand; "mark you this! If a 'low origin' be the social argument, then I am minded of no palace as the habitat of my own bringing

up. But here I tell you: I've not come to the White House to be ruled. Once I was set to the defence of New Orleans. The society of that great city was against me, and I put society under martial law; a society legislature was thereby shocked, and I dissolved it; a society Frenchman murmured against this, and I marched him out of town with two bayonets at his back; a society American denounced the expulsion, and I clapped him in irons; a society judge issued a writ of release, and I arrested him. Incidentally, I beat Pakenham and his English, and did what I was sent to do. Now I've been ordered to Washington by the public and given duties to perform. I look to find here conditions of sympathy and friendship and support. If they be not here, I'll construct them; if, being here, they fail me, I'll supply their places. Notably, should I get up some morning to discover myself without a newspaper"—Duff Green sweats now and pricks up his ears—"there shall one grow instantly from the ground like any Jonah's gourd. Your ladies will not receive Mrs. Eaton whose 'origin is low!' And for that cogent reason Mr. Eaton must not be Secretary of War! Man, have I been lifted to a presidency to consult wives and gossips in picking my constitutional advisers? Go; print

that list—print it as I give it you;—go!” The breath of the General’s indignation fairly carried Duff Green into the hall; and even when the door was closed behind him, I could follow by ear as he fled towards the stair with a fat shuffle that told of terror.

“The man exhausts me,” said the General, as he refilled his pipe.

“I think I’ll write to Frank Blair.”

“Why?” and the General looked up.

“We should have him ready to start a Jackson paper in Washington when Duff Green deserts.”

When I turned out on the next morning I found the fogs and mists of the day before departed and blown aside, and a bright sky overhead. There was no frost; but on the contrary a fine spring promise in the air that smelled in one’s nostril like the breath of budding trees. The roads, too, were more in the way of reform, and here and there a dry spot showed in profert of what would be. Altogether it was quite an April rather than a February morning. I finished shaving and dressing and called Jim to brush my coat. A hostler before he became a valet, Jim was used to accompany these brush-labors with an aspiration like unto the escape of steam; a sound held sovereign by him for giving a horse’s coat

a gloss, and therefore good for mine. I had gone forth in an earlier day to break Jim of these stable tricks, but, making no headway, wisely gave it up, and Jim hissed on unchecked. There be things your African won't learn; there be things he will learn; and effort to suppress in the one direction or excite enterprise in the other, is thrown away. Aware on these points, I had taken years before the bridle of restraint off Jim, and to give him his due he went the better with his head free.

When brushed to fit Jim's notion of the spic and span, I settled my chin in my black stock and went to call upon the General. I would know how he held himself on the back of his bleedings and his wraths against Duff Green.

I found him over a bowl of coffee and with a pipe going; he had been up and breakfasted an hour before. Also, he had gotten letters to please him and was in top spirits.

I recall looking at him as I entered his chamber, and thinking, as I noted his quick, game-cock air, full of life and resolution, how little he seemed that invalid who but the evening before was opening veins and lying ill with old wounds. The difference would have amazed any save myself, who had seen too much of him to be now astonished. The

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

General could pull himself together like a watch-spring. Moreover, he fed on sensation, and a glow at his heart's roots was better for him than a meal of victuals. I've borne witness as he rode into the wilderness to conquer Weatherford and his Creeks, with a month-old bullet in his shoulder and its fellow in his arm. He was so feeble and nigh death that he must be handed to his saddle like a sack of bran, and each hour the surgeons must bathe him over with sugar-of-lead water to keep life in his body. And yet, from the outset, and on bad food and with the ground for his bed, he began to mend. The man lived on sensation, I say, like a babe on milk. He would walk up and down a line of battle and be as drunk on rifle smoke as any other on brandy.

When I came into his room I found the General—pipe and coffee for the moment in retirement—to his own evident satisfaction, but in a rusty raven voice I fear, humming *The Star Spangled Banner*. His eyes were closed. He was sitting by the fire, beating out the time of the music with pipe held like a baton in his claw-like hand, wearing meanwhile much the air of your critic at an opera. His notes slipped frequently into quavers, and there was constant struggle to keep from lapsing into the savage minor key.

"You make grewsome music for a bright morning, General," said I; "it sounds dolefully like a wail."

"That's a majestic tune, Major," he replied, opening his eyes. "It never fails to stir me, and would bear comparison with *Old Hundred*, albeit one tells of religion and the other of patriotism. After all, what should be the separation between true patriotism and true religion?"

"Last evening," I retorted, "you fell upon me hip and thigh because I said you were not a politician but a president; you would have it that the two were synonyms for each other. Also, you declared that no one might be both a politician and a Christian. Now you talk of no separation between patriotism and religion. General, you go to bed in one frame and get up in another; you are not consistent."

"I'll not quarrel with you," said he, "though to say, as you would seem to, that a president and a patriot are ever the same, is begging the question and a far shot from the truth. I still stick for it, however, that *The Star Spangled Banner* comes close to religion in its influence; I've heard it given while the big guns were speaking at the front, and I may tell you, sir, it brought water to my eyes."

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

I could well believe this, for the General was as soon to shed tears as a woman; and withal so readily excited that on least occasion his hand would shake like a leaf in a ripple of wind. He said the latter was from coffee and tobacco and not from natural nervousness. He was half right and half wrong. This tremble of the hands was the vibration of that mighty machinery of the man when the belts were thrown on for utter action. However, this is all aside the story.

The promulgation in Duff Green's valued imprint of the General's designs had made a stir, I warrant you. The capital community seized on the list of coming cabinetees with wondrous relish. Delighted day by day over the tattle of office, the local public sat up, one and all, and chattered of the printed names like unto a coop of catbirds. Particularly, I might add, were the Eatons tossed from tongue to tongue; folk took sides, and some assailed while others defended, and no little heat found generation. The General admired the buzz and clash—for his ears were open and he heard of it—being as fond of storms as a petrel; and for myself, I was well enough pleased. It was prior to my interview with Peg, you are to remember, and I not yet her partisan; I half

hoped those resentful clamors against the Eatons would stay the General at the eleventh hour.

"It's not yet too late," said I, "to have White for the war portfolio and leave Eaton in his Senate seat. I repeat, there's the country to think of."

The General was blandly immovable. Said he, "I have told you how it's a war on me as much as a war on Peg. They fight really against me; they attack her good name in their criminal strategy. Besides, Major, you do the country insult." Here he gave me a smile. "The country is larger than you would admit and not to be easily shaken or over-set. Nor are you and I of such import as we think. The worst that both of us might do of public evil would hardly serve to rock the boat. And though the common interest should dip gunwale a trifle, to this side or to that, are we to throw overboard a girl on an argument of trimming ship? I say to you for the last time, I'm no such mariner."

The latter sentences were vivid of spirit, and it was clear the General had given the Eatons a deal of consideration since the night before, with the result of stiffening his first determination.

"You'll find more folk than myself," I

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

observed at last, "to differ with concerning this business. I do not believe the town is like to sit down quietly with the arrangement."

"We will cross that river," said he, "when we come to it. But why, Major, should you and I continue whirling flails over this old straw? It was between us most thoroughly threshed last evening. I think you are right about the town, however, and that's why I'm waiting now in my apartment. Mud or no mud, I would else be in the saddle for a morning ride. I'm in momentary hope of visitation by a delegation of society Redsticks, who, I understand, connive a descent upon me. They propose at the coming pow-wow to demand my Eaton intentions, and to make protest against them should their most worshipful fancy disapprove." The term "Redsticks," which the General employed, was a kind of border slang and the name given to the Creek hostiles in Weatherford's war. "You must stand to my back, Major, when the enemy arrives." This, with a glance of humor which showed the General as not attaching vast emphasis to the invasion or what might grow from it.

"I will abide the shock of your Redsticks' charge," I said, smiling with him, "unless they bring a reserve of women to the field. With the first dire swish of warlike crinoline I shall

abandon you to the fate you've invited. I have stood to odds ; but my courage is not proof against an angry woman."

The General beamed in his droll fashion and, shifting our ground of talk, said he had letters to write and needed my help. It may as well be known, for soon or late it is bound to escape into notice, that I wrote most of the General's letters. He was a perilous hand with a pen, and no more a speller than a poet.

But there would be no letters written that day; for when we were in the very act and article of beginning, Augustus came in with a card.

"Ah! Colonel Towson, U. S. A.," read the General. "Show him up." This last to Augustus. "The Redsticks would seem to have dwindled to one," observed the General, turning to me. "This Colonel Towson was to be their spokesman. Now he comes alone. He is a very brave or a very ignorant man." And the General sniffed dangerously, and yet in manner comic, as recognizing the elements of a farce.

Colonel Towson, I must needs say, was a poor feature of a man, with a trivial face in which the great expression was a noble opinion of himself. He was of the cavalry, as I judged by the facings on his regimentals, for our

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

visitor appeared in full uniform, and for part of his regalia dragged a clattering saber and wore fierce spurs to his heels. Plainly he was one of your egregious fops; and his breast was trussed outward and upward with the fullness of a pigeon's by dint of some vain contrivance inside his garments. As he brought his heels together, and stood with a deal of splendor just inside the door, the General ran him over with questioning eye that took in everything from the wax on his moustache to the gilt on his spurs.

"What do you want, sir?" demanded the General, as blunt as a hammer.

"I am Colonel Towson, Mr. President; the paymaster of the forces."

Pigeon-breast spoke in high, affected tones, and would clip his words and slur his "rs" in a mincing fashion beyond imitation.

"Of what forces?"

The voice was calculated to plant dismay in the other's youthful ears. I was aware how the General's ferocity was assumed, and that deep in his throat he was laughing. I should have laughed myself, but managed instead to establish a firm gravity.

"Of the army, Mr. President."

The high tone began to squeak from agi-

tation. And no marvel! The General's frown was enough to abash a lion.

"Are you come to me on duty?"

"No, sir, Mr. President, I —"

"Then why do you wear your side arms?"

The General could throw an expression into his face before which a hostile council of red Indians had been known to shrink and turn gray beneath the paints wherewith they were tallowed. The hapless Pigeon-breast was shaking in the shadow of one of the General's most hateful looks. When the other made no response, the General resumed:

"Note this, sir; I am not in the habit of being terrorized by the military forces of the nation. Never again presume to come into my presence armed and spurred, unless required by the regulations."

"I'll retire, Mr. President, and change my apparel."

This was feebly piped, and poor Pigeon-breast came nigh to wrinkling his coat in attempts to bow conciliation and apology.

"State your errand, sir, now you are here," commanded the General. "I've no time for two visits from you."

Pigeon-breast took what confidence he might from the General's brusque permission, and drew from his cuff a memorandum; as it

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST

were, the heads of a speech. Clearing his throat and collecting himself, he began what may have been a most lucid and eloquent discourse. Its effect was lost in the delivery, however; for what with the high thin tones, and what with the orator's lady-like affectations, neither the General nor myself could make more of it than of the laughter of a loon. For his own careless part, I don't think the General paid even slight attention. If Pigeon-breast were uttering thunder, then it was summer thunder and high and harmless, far above his head; he minded it no more than the scraping of a fiddle at a tavern dance. In the midst, Pigeon-breast was made to halt. The General waved his hand as demanding silence.

"We will shorten this. For whom do you come to me?"

"I was asked to see you on behalf of Mrs. Calhoun and the ladies of Washington."

The General glanced in my direction. Of course we well understood that the mighty purpose of Pigeon-breast was to protest against Eaton's selection. Indeed, we had caught enough of his oratory to teach us that much. Moreover, Pigeon-breast had at one stage read aloud the article from Duff Green's paper as the reason of his coming, and received the

General's word that the list therein set forth was authorized.

But we had caught no word of Mr. Calhoun, and her name, when it did fall, came as a surprise. The Vice-President's wife was the head of capital fashion—the stately queen of the little court. Both she and her husband however, had called on the Eatons just following their wedding; and now to discover the lady in the enemy's van owned a sinister as well as an unexpected side. It looked like a change of front, and much sustained the General's surmise that this was to be a war on him rather than the Eatons; that its purpose was politics while its source was a plot.

"Did I not tell you that here was an intrigue?" asked the General. I continued blowing my tobacco smoke in silence by the fire. Then, with utter suavity, the General returned to Pigeon-breast. "I must treat the messenger with politeness because of his father's principals. Let me understand: You come from 'Mrs. Calhoun and the ladies of Washington'?"

Pigeon-breast bowed as profoundly as he might with his armor on and gasped assent.

"And their objections are to Mr. Eaton in the cabinet—really to Mrs. Eaton?"

Another bow and gasp from the bold Pigeon-breast.

"Sir, give my compliments to 'Mrs. Calhoun and the ladies of Washington.' Say I much regret that I must disregard their wishes. Say, also, they do grave wrong, a wrong greater than mere injustice, to one who in all that stands best is their equal. Being ladies, they should receive her as one of themselves; being women, they should feel for her as an innocent maligned; being Christians, they should come to her succor as one borne upon by troubles. These would be graceful courses, and make for the glory of 'Mrs. Calhoun and the ladies of Washington.' On the point of their protest, however, describe me as saying that Mr. Eaton will be of my cabinet; I shall tender him the portfolio of war and he has signified his readiness to accept. I do not know what this may imply socially; I do not decide that, but leave it to the better and more experienced tastes of 'Mrs. Calhoun and the ladies of Washington.' Also, you are to do me this favor, sir."

Pigeon-breast, who was flattered by the General's long harangue, and inclined to congratulate himself over a polite finale to what as an interview at one moment was stricken of a storm, here aroused himself smartly.

"Believe me, Mr. President, any favor in my power."

Pigeon-breast touched his brow with pro-

digious military *eclat*, and then slapped his leg with his hand like cracking off a pistol.

"Why, then, the favor is simple. Tell every enemy of mine, and especially every friend of Henry Clay, my decision touching Mr. Eaton. I want the news to travel fast and far. My friends will sustain Mr. Eaton; and as for my foes, it shall go hard but I discover ways to deal with them. You may depart, sir."

Pigeon-breast saluted with flattered chin in air, and went his way, and presently we heard his saber on its jingling journey down the stair.

"I do not understand that word about the Calhouns," observed the General, when we were alone. "The Calhouns have already visited the Eatons and professed friendship. As for myself, I've supposed Calhoun my supporter. And why should he be otherwise?" The General shook his head as one puzzled. "We must, I fear, count as against us more than Henry Clay and his rogues of Bargain and Corruption. Well, so be it; a fight is like a frolic in so far that 'the more, the merrier,' as a proverb, applies with equal force to both."

Now that Pigeon-breast was gone, and we being alone, I remonstrated with the General for that he had entertained our caller and submitted to his anti-Eaton speech. I said it disparaged his dignity; that he had already

PORT WINE DUFF AND PIGEON-BREAST.

listened to Duff Green, which was bad enough, but now he must stand with half-patient ear while yon clanking popinjay reeled off his high-pitched opposition and that of those befeathered dames whom he professed to represent. It was a poor beginning for a president.

"Why, sir," retorted the General, "you, yourself, are wont to hector me at will; I may not buy a coat without you finding fault. Major, I fear me you are the proud one. To be sure, I stoop when I listen to such as Duff and our martial visitor just here. But you must know what Franklin said of stooping: 'The world is like a tunnel, dark and low of roof. He who stoops a little as he passes through will save himself many a thump.'"

"Oh, if it were to be," said I, "an argument of saw and proverb and slips of dried wisdom, I might quote you not a few and redder your ears. What I say is, you sacrifice dignity; you know it full well at that."

The General laughed. "But I had my reasons, Major. I sent him whom you term 'Pigeon-breast' forth to be a poultice to this Eaton inflammation. I want to draw it to a head. Duff Green wouldn't do; he'd keep our talk to himself, since my harshness hurt his self-love, and he's too vain to tell a tale against himself. And again, he would be made silent

with thoughts of my possible resentment. With Pigeon-breast the cards fall differently. Did you not remark how well I flattered? At the outset he was afraid of me. In the end I packed his timidity in cotton-batting and sang it to sleep; I rocked his cradle and warmed his milk for him. I called up his pride and made him my messenger. He will tell the Eaton story to all, and give me as his authority; that is what I seek. It is a business that will be the sooner over by setting folk's mouths to the quarrel at once. And we should make it short for Peg's sake. Poor Peg; it's her tavern origin that kindles patrician wrath, and it is their aristocratic method to blow calumny upon her. Slander, Major,"—here the General donned his manner of philosopher—"slander, Major, is as much the resource of your true aristocrat as poison of your Turk."

CHAPTER III

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

Before, in this relation, I go to that meeting with Peg whereof I made account in the commencement of my story, it would be proper, I think, to notice a singular personality; one who, in intermittent fashion, will run in and out of my history like a needle through cloth. His sewing, however, will be of the friendliest, for he was as loyal to the General as any soul who breathed.

Mordecai Noah, was the man's name. The General possessed a good previous acquaintance with him, although, as in the gentle instance of Peg, I was now to meet him for the earliest time.

Noah was a writer of plays, and an editor; moreover, he was a gentleman of substance and celebration in New York City, where his paper did stout service for the General the hot autumn before. Noah also had been America's envoy to the Barbary States during the years of Madison. A Hebrew of purest strain, Noah was of the Tribe of Judah and the House of David, and the wisecraces of his race

told his lineage, and that he was descended of David in a right line, and would be a present King of the Jews were it not that the latter owned neither country nor throne. However this may have been—and indeed a true accuracy for such ancestral cliff-climbing seems incredible, when any little slip would spoil the whole—Noah was of culture and quiet penetration; withal cunning and fertile to a degree. Also, I found his courage to be the steadiest; he would fight with slight reason, and had in a duel some twenty years before, with the first fire, killed one Cantor, a flamboyant person—the world might well spare him—on the Charleston racetrack, respectably at ten paces. I incline to grant space favorable to Noah; for he played his part with an integrity as fine as his intelligence, while his own modesty, coupled with that vulgar dislike of Jews by ones who otherwise might have named him in the annals of that day, has operated to obscure his name.

The General told me of Noah somewhat at length on this morning, and just following the marching away of Pigeon-breast. He said he had sent for him, and that any moment might bring his footfall to the door.

As he dwelt on Noah and his characteristics, I was struck by a word. It is worth record as a sidelight on his own nature.

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

The General showed gusto and a lip-smacking interest in Noah's duel with the man Cantor, and ran out every detail as one runs out a trail. I could not forbear comment.

"How is it," said I, "you so dote on strife?"

"I don't dote on strife. But when it comes to that, Major, war is as natural as peace."

"If it were so," I returned, "still your admiration is entirely for war. You do not love peace."

"I don't love war so much as warriors," he contended. "I understand your war man; and I do not fear him. Besides, your honest soul of battles may be made a best friend. I feel the rankle of a Benton bullet in my shoulder as we talk together; and yet to-day a Benton faces my detractors on the floor of the Senate. I say again, I love the natural warrior; I comprehend him and he gives me no feeling of fear."

"Do you tell me you can be a prey to fear?" I put the query as an element of dispute. His reply was the word that surprised me.

"Fear?" and the General repeated the word with a sight of earnestness. "Sir, I

P E G G Y O ' N E A L

fear folk who won't fight; I fear preachers, Quakers. They are a most dangerous gentry to run crosswise with."

When Noah arrived, I was still sitting with the General. Noah was a sharp, nimble man of middle size and years, and physically as deft and sure of movement as a mountain goat. He took hold of my hand on being presented by the General, and I observed how he had an iron steadiness of grip. I liked that; I am, myself, of prodigious thews and as strong of arm as any canebrake bear, and when folk shake hands with me, a blush of emphasis is to my humor. I like to know that I've hold on somebody and that somebody has hold on me. As I looked in Noah's face, I was struck with the contradiction of his black eyes, and hair red as the fur of a fox. On the whole, I felt pleased to know that Noah was the General's true friend; no one would have cared for his enmity.

"I feel as though you were an old acquaintance," said Noah, and his face lighted as I've observed a sudden splash of sunshine to light a deep wood. "The General has named you so often in his letters, and spoken of you so much in what interviews I've enjoyed with him, that you are to me no stranger."

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

"And I've heard frequently and much of you," I replied.

We from that moment were as thoroughly near to one another as though neighbors for a decade. It was a strange concession of my nature, for men come slowly upon terms of confidence with me, and my suspicions are known for their restlessness.

"This is my thought, Noah," said the General; "this is why I summoned you. Blessed is he to whom one is not driven with explanations, and who intuitively comprehends. You are that man, Noah." The General's vivid manner was a delight to me. "There's the Eaton affair—you read my scheme of a cabinet in the paper. There's to be a war upon the Eatons—upon me. Already I hear a dull rumble as the opposition takes its artillery into position. I would know what this means. Is it a frill-and-ruffle wrath alone and confined to our ladies? Or does it go deeper and plant its tap-root in a plot? You know what I should say. Four years pass as swiftly as four clouds; and Henry Clay would still hanker for a presidency. These Bargain and Corruption wolves will hunt my administration for every foot of the way, and strive to drag it down. You gather my notion, Noah. Discover all you can; back-track this Eaton trouble—it's but

just started and the trail is short—and bring me sure word, not only of those who foment it, but of the position held towards it by both Clay and Calhoun. Of the hatred of the former I'm certain, and that he'll strike at me with foulest blow. Calhoun, elected to the vice-presidency by my side, I would have leaned on confidently; but a word has been said—the Major heard it—that nurtures doubt. Let me learn all there is of this tangle with what dispatch you may. My own belief goes to it that, when all is said, search will discover Clay to be the sole, lone bug under the chip, and Calhoun—and put it the worst way—but an indifferent looker-on."

Noah paid wordless attention until the General was through. Then he spoke. "General," said Noah, "I had already heard much when you sent for me. Your portfolio purposes have not been a secret well kept. Also, it has been abroad as gossip for almost a week, this ill talk of the Eatons; this morning's publication simply served to give it volume. Thus far, and personally, Henry Clay has had naught to do with it; his friends, however, have been prompt to lift up the cry. You are right, too, when you regard the rage of these wolves as threatening you. They would, as you declare, tear down your administration. They will

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

leave nothing untried. They will hang on your flanks through the defiles and in the thickets of society; and it is thus they will seek to harass you by means of the Eatons. They reckon no slight help to their plans, General, through your high temper; I say this for no end of irritation, but to put you on guard with yourself."

Noah would have gone forth at once, but the General held him in speech about Van Buren, who as present Governor of New York must resign his Albany position to assume place as the General's premier.

Noah, who lived Van Buren's right hand of power in his own region, was full to the brim with him, and I, who had yet to be introduced to the little Knickerbocker, sat absorbed of his description. The General had met Van Buren a dozen times or more; but in any sense of intimacy he was as ignorant of his future secretary as was I myself. We therefore gave fullest heed to Noah, who talked well, being one able to take you a man to pieces as though he were a clock, and show in detail his wheels and particular springs, and point you to the pendulum of motive for every hour he struck.

We were in mid-swing of talk when I was called. It was none other than Jim, to bring me that information—threatening, he deemed

it—of the beautiful Peg who waited my coming below.

As I was going, the door standing open, one in coat of clerical finish presented himself without announcement, and rapped modestly on the door frame. I had had experience of his flock and knew him by his feathers. Plainly, he was a solicitor of subscriptions for some amiable charity. The book in his hand spoke loudly for my surmise.

My doubt, had one been entertained, would have found dissipation by the words of the General, as, harsh and strident, they overtook me on my way.

"No, sir," I heard him say; "no, sir! Not one splinter!—not one two-bit piece! I shall begin as I mean to end. You people are not to send me out of the White House, a pauper and a beggar, as you sent poor Jim Monroe."

Doughtily resolved, oh General! hard without and soft within! Doughtily resolved and weakly executed, when eight years later you are made to borrow ten thousand dollars wherewith to pay your White House debts before ever you wend homeward to your Hermitage!

After forty and when youth's suppleness has fled, one's fancy is as prone to lapse into a stiff inertness as one's joints. It came then to

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

pass, as I journeyed parlorward along the old-fashioned corridors and stairways of the Indian Queen, that I in nowise was visited by any glint of the possible beauty of Peg, nor yet of her honest injuries; but rather, in half peevish fashion, I considered her a proposed incumbrance to the General's administration, in which I may be pardoned for saying—I, who had been busy with trowel and plumb-line about the corner stone and subsills of his whole career—I was smitten of an interest. Truly, I had been Eaton's friend; and had used him well, too. Also, I was glad to have him take Peg to wife, since such was his fancy. But why should she and he rise subsequently up to vex folk who were like to own troubles more properly their own? That was the question I held acridly under my tongue as I went onward to my meeting with Peg, and I fear some blush of it showed in my face.

Over six feet and broad as a door, I doubtless towered forbiddingly upon her imaginings when I came up to Peg; these and the cloud on my forehead—for I am sure one darkened it—showed her to be both brave and innocent when, without hesitation or holding back, she put forth her hands to me. I've told somewhere how she gave me her hand; that was wrong; she gave me both, and gave them with

P E G G Y O ' N E A L

a full sweep of frankness, that showed confident at once and sad, as though with the motion of it she offered herself for my protection. She spoke no word; her little hands lay in my great ones, and I felt within them the beat of a sharp, small pulse as of one under strain and stress. Once, long before, I had toiled upward with caitiff secrecy and captured a sleeping mother-pigeon on her nest. The quick flutter of the bird's heart beneath my fingers was as this poor throbbing in Peg's hands. I remember, also, I was melted into the same sudden compassion for the pigeon that seized on me for Peg.

"I came to you because you are the General's old friend," she said. Her sweet, large eyes were swimming, and her voice began to break. Then she put out an effort and brought herself to bay. "I've nothing to ask; not much to say, neither. I know what the General would do; my husband has told me. I know, too, what it will mean of slander and insult and suffering. And yet—I've prayed upon it; prayed and again prayed!—I must go forward. I can not, nay, I dare not become a bar across the path of my husband; I dare not poison his success."

All this time I had been holding to her hands, for I felt her great beauty and it made

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

me forget the name of time. Besides, this was no common meeting, but rather the making of a league and covenant between folk who were to be allies throughout a bitter strife. I think she noticed my awkward and scarce polite retention of her fingers, for she withdrew them, while a little flush of color painted itself in her face. Still, she did not do this unkindly; and, I may say, there was nothing of sentiment in my breast which cried for rebuke or tendered her aught but honor.

"Pardon a freedom in one twice your years, but you are wondrous beautiful." These were my first words to Peg. "Mr. Eaton has come by mighty fortune."

"My beauty, as you call it," said she, with just the shadow of a smile that told more of pain than gladness, "has been no good ground to me and borne me nettles for a crop. I had been happier for a wholesome plainness."

Then we settled to a better conversation; and the while her sweetness was growing on me like a vine and I becoming more and more soundly her partisan with every moment.

"My husband is much honored," said she at one point, "and deems himself advanced by what the General would offer. Also, he sees nothing of the darkness into which I stare; he sees only the high station and the power of it, and

the way shines to his feet. But I know what society will do; I have not been child and girl and woman in Washington without experience of it. Folk will turn from me and ignore me and seek to blot me out. If it were none save myself to be considered, I would abandon the field; I would hunt seclusion, cultivate obscurity as if it were a rose. But am I to become a drag on the man who loves me and gives me his name? Am I to be fetters for his feet—a stumbling-block before him?"

"There is no need of this apprehension," said I; "you should have a higher spirit, since you are innocent."

"Innocent, yes!" she cried, and her deep eyes glowed; "innocent, yes! As heaven hears me, innocent!" Her manner dismayed me with what it unveiled of suffering. Then in a lower tone, and with a kindle of that cynicism to come upon folk who, working no evil and doing no wrong, are yet made to find themselves fronted of adverse tides and blown against by winds of cruelty, "Innocent, yes; but what relief comes then? I am young; many are still children with my years. And, thanks to a tavern bringing up,"—here was hardness now—"I have so seen into the world's heart as to know that it is better to be a rogue called honest, than honest and called a rogue. That

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

is true among men; I tell you it is doubly true among women."

To be open about it, I was shocked; not that what Peg said was either foolish or untrue. But to be capable of such talk, and she with that loving, patient mouth, showed how woeful must have been the lesson. But it gave me none the less a deal of sureness for the level character of her intellect, and I saw she carried within her head the rudiments of sense.

"What is it you would ask of me?" said I, at last. "I can only promise beforehand anything in my power."

"I would ask nothing," she replied, "save the assurance that you will be my husband's friend and mine. I see grief on its way as one sees a storm creep up the sky. Oh!" she suddenly cried with a sparkle of tears, "my husband! He must not be made ashamed for me! Rather than that, I would die!"

Peg bowed her flower-like head and wept, I, sitting just across, doing nothing, saying nothing; which conduct was wise on my part, albeit I hadn't the wit to see it at the time, and was simply daunted to silence by a sorrow I knew not how to check. It was a tempest, truly, and swayed and bent her like a willow in a wind. At last she overtook herself; she

smiled with all the brightness of nature, or the sun after a flurry of rain.

"It will do me good," she said; "and when the time comes I will be braver than you now think."

When Peg smiled she gave me a flash of white behind the full red of her lips. Then I noticed a peculiar matter. She wanted the two teeth that, one on each side of the middle teeth, should grow between the latter and the eye teeth. When I say she wanted these, you are not to understand she once owned them and that they were lost. These teeth had never been; where six should have grown there were but four; and these, set evenly and with dainty spaces between, took up the room, each claiming its just share. The teeth were as white as rice, short and broad and strong, and the eye teeth sharply pointed like those of a leopard. There gleamed, too, a shimmer of ferocity about these teeth which called for all Peg's tenderness of mouth, ay! even that sadness which lurked in plaintive shadows about the corners, to correct. And yet what struck one as a blemish went on to be a source of fascination and grew into the little lady's chiefest charm—these separated sharp white leopard teeth of Peg's.

When I came into the room I was thinking

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

on the hardships to the General's administration; now I regarded nothing save the perils of Peg herself. With that on my soul I started, man-fashion, to talk courageously.

"After all, what is there to cower from?" said I. "You know society, you say; doubtless that is true. I confess I do not, since this is almost my first visit to the town. But I know men, and of what else is society compounded? Their heaviest frown, if one but think coolly and be sure of one's self, should not weigh down a feather."

"Why, yes," she cried, "you know men. But do you know women? Men are as so many camp followers of society; it is the women who make the fighting line. And oh! their shafts are tipped with venom!"

"It cannot be so bad," I insisted. "So-called society, which must take on somewhat the character of come-and-go with the ebb and flow of administrations, begins with the White House, does it not?"

"We will do our best," smiled Peg, without replying to my question.

Probably she comprehended the hopeless sort of my ignorance and the uselessness of efforts to set forth to me the "Cabinet Circle," the "Senate Circle," the "Supreme Court Circle," and those dozen other mysterious

rings within rings, wheels within wheels, which the complicated perfection of capital social life offers for the confusion of folk.

"Unquestionably, the White House," Peg went on, "is the citadel, the great tower, and we can always retreat to that. We will do well enough; but oh!"—here Peg laid her hand like a rose leaf on my arm—"you do not understand, a man can not understand, what we shall go through."

"Let us have stout hearts for all that," said I. "It behooveth us to be bold, since no victory, even over weakness, was ever constructed of timidity. Besides, the foe may offer us its defeat by its own errors. I recall, how once upon a time, certain Creeks whom the General was to attack entrenched themselves, and all about felled trees and sharpened the branches into points, the whole as defensive as any bristle of bayonets. You, as thought these red engineers, would have deemed the place impregnable, for no one might force his way through this *chevaux de-frise*. But the General's military eye unlocked the situation. The sun-dried leaves and twigs were lying where they fell. An arrow, with blazing tow tied to its shaft and shot from a safe two hundred yards away, solved the problem. In a moment that precious defence was on fire; and the enemy, driven forth by the heat

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

and flame and smoke of it, were met in the open and destroyed to a man. We may yet smoke these society savages into a surrender by setting an honest torch to their surroundings. One thing we can promise ourselves." I remarked this in conclusion. "Whatever else may fail, at the worst, you shall not go wanting a revenge."

"And that thought is sweet, too," said she in return.

Peg's leopard teeth were not without significance; that much I saw. After all, her speech was to have been expected; for who will go further afield for revenge than your flesh and blood true woman, still of earth's fires and not ready for the skies?

Peg told me a portion of her story; partly because it was natural she should think that I, who had been a stranger to her, might justly want such knowledge; but mostly, I believe, for that she had an instinct to defend herself against what I might have preconceived to her disaster. Dear child, she had small cause to fret herself on that score! I remember she gave herself no little blame as the self-willed gardener of those thorny sorrows among which she had walked and was still sorrowfully to find her path. She would run on like this, as I recall:

"The first fault belonged with this tavern

of an Indian Queen. I could have been no older than eight when I knew how folk who came here, Congressmen and officers of state and their ladies, looked upon us who kept the place as but servants over servants, and took care not to meet us on an equal footing with themselves. My father and mother were dis-rated as mere tavern-keepers who sold their entertainment to any and to all; and I, so soon as I came to discretion and an ability to apprehend, found myself included in the ban thus set upon my people. I've seen nurses skurry to carry their charges off from childish games with me and the contamination of my baby contact. Later, in girlhood, I've overheard mothers while they warned their daughters to avoid me, and experienced the tilt-nosed airs of those same daughters who with superior arts of insolence stung me like wasps. More often than once, I've crept away to tears of shame because I was the daughter of a tavern.

"But in the end it hardened me. I had a perverse, retaliatory temper. I grew up beautiful, so folk told me; moreover, I knew it but too well by the merest glance in a glass. With my beauty,"—Peg spoke of it in mixed simplicity and sadness as though she recounted deformity—"I was wont to fashion my revenge. My father—not a poor man, for while taverns

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

may be vulgar they may be profitable—was ever ready to spend money on me; and I had only to hint at a comb or a ribbon or a ring, to find the gewgaw an hour after on my table. Good, poor man! my father, calm and careless enough under his condition so far as it rested on himself, felt for my humiliations, which now and again he could not fail to see, and sought with trinketry and luxury of dress to repair the injury. Neither he nor my mother spoke of what they both must have felt, that is our no-social condition, if one may so describe it; and for myself, I was too proud, and too tenderly in love with them for their thousand kindnesses, to bring it upon their notice.

“As I’ve said, I made my beauty the method of my revenge. I owned taste as well as looks, and my wits were as deep and as quick and as bright as my eyes. I’ve set many a wrinkle on many a fair brow by defeating it to second place in that woman’s rivalry of looks.

“For these wars, where loveliness tilts against loveliness, my allies were the men. Compliment for me was never silent on their lips. I was the town’s toast as I grew up. This put the women to an opposite course. As the men spoke of my beauty, the women shrugged their pure shoulders and told of my boldness; and I must confess that in a native

vivacity, together with that rebellion of the spirit born of their attitude towards me, I gave them endless evidence to go upon. I have lived my life without an immorality or the shadow of one; I have done no wrong wherewith to shame myself; but, reckless, careless, and with the frank ignorance of innocence—and then, to be sure, because it made those others angry—I was greedy of men's praise, withal too free of speech and eye, and thereby offered tongues eager to assail me the argument required as material for their ill work. They, the women, wove for me as bad a story as they might, and then wrapped it about me for a reputation. How I loathed and hated them! those who, worsted of my beauty, would tear me with calumny by way of reprisal!

“Now I must tell you, it was I who wearied first of that game where it was beauty on the one side against icy stare, arched brow, and covert innuendo on the other. No; my tongue would not have spared them—it was never a patient member, that tongue!—but for such artillery, as you would call it, my persecutors were out of reach. There is a gravity of words; they descend and never climb; they must, like a stone, come tumbling from above to do an injury. Wherefore these folk high

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

up were safe from me—safe from everything except my beauty; and since I maintained myself without a stain upon my virtue, even my beauty wore for them and theirs no real peril. Above, on the cliffs of society, they rolled down tale and whisper against me like so many black stones; in retort, though I might be beautiful and so madden them with the possession of what they lacked, I from below could harm them nothing. I think, too, some in pain of their own ugliness, envied and would have changed places with me. They would not, had they known what I knew and felt what I felt. My soul was in torment, and I grew never so callous but the darts of their forked malignancy would pierce and pain.

“It was to avoid conditions which grew at last intolerable—for I brooded when alone and magnified the evils of my position, turning morbid the while—that I wedded Mr. Timberlake. I never loved him; I took him to be a refuge rather than a husband, and my little life with him was not a happy one. By no fault of his, however; I think he loved me, and I know he did his best. I had nothing from him save kindness, and when he died in the Mediterranean I doubt not he carried into the other world a sincere regard for me.

"And I would have loved him if I could." Peg waved her hand with an accent of despair, and as one who had striven and failed beyond recall. "But I could not—could not; strive as I might, love would not come. I felt guilt to live with him; I was glad when he sailed away; and, God help me! my sighs over his death were the sighs of one released from bonds."

Peg broke and cried like any child. You should understand, however, that she was unjust to herself. What she said of her brooding aforetime to the frontier of the morbid was over-true. And, supersensitive, proud, her hope had wasted as her gloom grew; her griefs of girlhood, enlarged many fold doubtless, as she herself suspected, by stress of her own fancy sorrowing with a wound, had left solemn stamp upon her; and this took far too often and unjustly the shape of self-blame. Beneath all, and hidden deep within her breast, Peg carried small opinion of herself; thought herself selfish, hard, shallow, and of no rich depth of heart. She was wrong to the core; for her inner self was as beautiful as her face. And yet, despite knowledge on her own part, and her friends' assurances, in the ultimate recesses of her thoughts there existed a torture-chamber; and therein she ever racked herself

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

as the one wrongdoer in what she had passed through. There was no driving her from this; she was merciless against herself; and while none not the closest might know, for in the presence of non-friends and strangers she showed the iron fortitude of an Indian or a soldier, to myself and those with whom she practiced no reserve these self-flagellations were much too painfully plain.

I say, folk near to Peg were aware of this morbid lack of soul-vanity and good regard for herself. There should be one exception counted, and that, curious to tell, her own husband. Peg, for all he might be double her age, and I think no very handsome man at that, I could see, when I talked with her, loved Eaton as she loved her eyes or mothers love their children. And yet, never to him did she show her true feeling; in his presence she was the brave, gay, bright, strong, brilliant Peg, asking in the fight which followed no quarter and granting none, she seemed to the common world. It is curious, and presents a problem too involved for my solution, that Peg should have guarded against the one she most loved and shut the door upon discovery by him of her own wondrous self. Yet so it was; it stood patent to me from the beginning that

Eaton knew no more of Peg than of her whom he never met.

In her morbid estimates of her worth it is possible she feared to grant him too clear a view. She may have thought she would lose by it. The reason, however, for this great secrecy coupled with great love—this hiding from him for whom she would have died—I shall leave to be searched for by those scientists of souls who are pleased to explain the inexplicable. For myself, I confess I was baffled by it.

This, however, I will say ; the fact that Peg could so practice upon Eaton to his blindness gave me no high opinion of that gentleman. He should have groped for her and grasped her, and found her out for the loving, loyal, sorrowing heart she was ; and that he did not, but went in placid darkness of the treasure he held in his hands, content to have it so, marked him for a lack of insight and want of sympathy which I'm bound to say do not distinguish me. Such stolidity on the part of folk has caused me more often than once to consider whether the angels, by mere possession, may not at last find even heaven commonplace.

Still, it is none the less infuriating to witness so much beauty so much thrown away ! Indubitably, the economy of existence asks for

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

pigs as loudly as it asks for pearls, and to blame Eaton for failing in appreciation of Peg is as apart from equity as would be the flogging of a horse who sees no beauty in a moss-rose—and less, perhaps—not present in a musty lock of hay. However, it is none the less infuriating for that.

Mark you though, I would be guilty of no wrong to Eaton, nor establish him on too low a level in your esteem. He was in the Senate from Tennessee at the time, and of solid repute among his fellows. He was a brave, dull, good-humored sort, who thought better, perhaps, of a bottle than of a book—not to excess, you are to notice—and as a statesman, if he put out no fires, he kindled none; though he did no good, at worst he did no harm; and that, let me tell you, is a record somewhat better than the average. I have been attacked and charged with a distaste of Eaton. There are two words to go with that, and no one—and I challenge those who knew us both—can put his finger on any ill of word or deed or thought I ever aimed against him. Truly, I hunted not his company with horn and horse and hound; but what then? I take it, I'm as free to pick and choose for my intimates as any other. And I still declare what was in my thoughts in those hours I tell of, that Eaton, sluggish and some-

thing of a clod-head, and with a blurred, gray tone of fancy, was unworthy such a woman, whose love for him, be it said, was when I met her as boundless as the difficulty of accounting for its first existence. I say again, and the last time, I hold no dislike for Eaton, and more than once have done him good favors in days gone. That I shall grant him no extensive mention in these pages means no more than that he was but a supernumerary in the drama where of the General and Peg carried the great parts. Eaton came on and off ; but his lines were few and brief and burned with no interest. There is little reason for prodigious clamor over Eaton, and little there will be. But I am not to be accused of unfairness to the man for that he dwelt with an angel and was too thick to find it out.

Peg at last recalled herself from the dead Timberlake. She brushed away her tears.

"These are all of them you are to see," laughed Peg, stoutly, referring to her tears. "I promise to shed no more. However, you may quiet alarm ; a woman's tears are no such mighty matter." I showed perturbation, I suppose, and she would dissipate it.

Peg told me of her wedding with Eaton. She dwelt a deal on her love for him ; but since one consents to it as a sentiment, even though

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

its cause defy one's search, there comes no call to extend the details in this place.

It stood open to my eyes, however, as Peg talked, how no man was more loved than Eaton. And when I looked upon the ardent girl and considered, withal, the dull stolidity of the other, there would rise up pictures from my roving past to be as allegories of Peg's love. I would recall how once I saw a vine, blossom-flecked and beautiful, flinging its green tenderness across a hard insensate wall; and that was like Peg's love. Or it would come before me how I had known a mountain, sterile, seamed, unlovely, where it heaved itself against the heavens, a repellant harsh shoulder of stone. The June day, fresh and new and beautiful, would blush in the east, and her first kiss was for that cold gray, rude, old rock. That day at noon in her warm ripeness would rest upon it. Her latest glance, as our day died in the west, was for it; and when the valley and all about were dark, her last rays crowned it. And the vivid day, with her love for that unregardful mountain, the rich day wasting herself on the desert peak that would neither respond nor understand, was as the marvel of Peg's love.

It is all the mystery that never ends; woman in her love-reasons is not to be fathomed

nor made plain. The cry of her soul is to love rather than to be loved; her happiness lives in what she gives, not what she gets. This turn for the good fortunes of men; also, it offers the frequent spectacle of a woman squandering herself—for squandering it is—on one so unworthy that only the sorrow of it may serve to smother the laughter that else might be evoked. However, I am not one to discuss these things; being no analyst, but only a creature of blunders, too clumsy for theories as subtle, not to say as brittle, as spun glass. Wherefore, let us put aside Peg's love and break off prosing. The more, since I may otherwise give some value to a jest of the General's—made on the same day—who would have it I was at first sight half in love with Peg myself. This was the General's conception of humor and owned no other currency—I, being twice Peg's age and in the middle forties, and not a trifle battered of feature by my years in the field. I was old enough to be Peg's father;—but when comes to that, Eaton was quite as old.

It was time to seek the General, I said. Peg and I had arrived at a frank acquaintance and we went together to the General's room in good opinion of ourselves, she the better by a new staunch friend, and I prosperous with thoughts for her of a coming elevation con-

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

sistent with her graces of mind and person, and which should atone as much as might be for what she had suffered heretofore. We decided that Peg should wear a gay look, and harrow the General with no tears.

As we went along I was given to quite a novel enthusiasm, I recollect; and it was the more strange since, while no pessimist, I never had found celebration as one whose hope was wont to wander with the stars. I could see the white days ahead for Peg; and albeit I fear their glory shone not to her apprehension as it did to mine, and while they came slowly as days shod with lead, dawn they did, as he shall witness who goes with this history to the end.

My servant Jim was sent with a message to the General to give him the word of Peg's coming. During our talk in the parlor, Jim, be it said, was never far to call. Obviously, Jim proposed for me no dangers of bright eyes so far as remained with him to be my shield. He dodged in and out of the room, now with this pretext and now with that, and when I bade him repair to the General to say that Peg and I would visit him, the gray old rogue was fair irresolute, and hung in the wind as though he had but to turn his back on us and bring down every evil. I drove him forth at last, and when Peg and I would tap on the

General's door our black courier was just coming away.

While the General was greeting Peg—rather effusively for him, so I thought—Jim, detaining me at the door, took the liberty of a private word.

"Now you-all is yere, Marse Major," observed Jim, and his manner was of complaint and weariness, "an' where Marse Gen'ral kin keep a eye on you, I feels free an' safe to go projectin' 'round about my own consarns. I was boun' I wouldn't leave you alone, Marse Major, in d' parlors; I shore tells you it makes Jim draw long brefs an' puts him to fear an' tremblin' lest every minute's gwine to be his nex', while any woman as han'some as dish yere Missis Eaton is pesterin' nigh. You-all can't tell what dey'll do, or what you'll do! Which Jim has knowed Love to up an' prounce on a man like a mink on a settin' hen; an' him jes' merely lookin' at one of them sirens, as d' good book calls 'em. That's d' shore enough fac', Marse Major; an' you-all oughter be mighty keerful an' keep Jim hoverin' about d' lan'scape at all sech meetin's. It's a heap safer, that a-way; you hyar Jim!" At this point of warning Jim stopped like a clock that has run down.

"You asked me if you might have one

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

drink from the demijohn in my closet," I said.

"Yassir, Marse Major, I does."

"You took four, you scoundrel; you took at least four, as I can tell by the mill-wheel clatter of your tongue."

"On'y three, Marse Major; on'y three! An' you don't want to disrecollect, Marse Major, pore old Jim's got a heap on his mind to make him thirsty."

"I shall not disrecollect, as you call it, to lock my closet door. I don't propose, sir, to furnish you forty-year-old whisky to become the inspiration of such crazy harangues as I've just listened to."

My voice was stern, and the awful threat of locking the closet took the heart out of Jim.

"Why, Marse Major," he began apologetically, "Jim warn't aimin' to say nothin' to cumfusticate you; Jim was talkin' for your good. I wouldn't go for to lock up that closet, Marse Major; how's Jim gwine to get your clothes to bresh? Besides, Jim's done said his say, an' arter this he'll nacherally go about as cat-foot an' as wary an' as quiet as a coon at noon, that's what Jim will. You has heard d' las' word from Jim, Marse Major; d' very las' word. On'y don't go for to lock that closet door; if you does, most likely we'll

lose d' key an' it's gwine to get in our way."

"Well, sir, we shall see," I replied, severely. "One thing is certain; I'm not to have my servant, at the age of seventy, make a show of himself. I'll send you back to Tennessee first."

Jim departed, sensibly subdued.

With Peg and the General I found Eaton, who arrived while I was receiving my lecture from the sapient Jim. We greeted each other with warmth, and I could see that Peg felt this warmth and took a glow from it. Dear girl! he was her all; she had friendship for those who were his friends, love for those who loved him; and, twisting a commandment, Peg would do unto others as they did unto him.

Eaton was a blond, ruddy man. As we released each other's hands, he said: "I'm here to offer my thanks to the General. I was speaking of this cabinet matter to my colleague, White. He is greatly pleased. By the way, General,"—here Eaton wheeled on the General—"my senate seat will want an occupant. Why not prevail on our friend, the Major, to take it?"

"No, no!" responded the General, quickly and with a gay energy; "that would never match my plans. The Major, or I much mistake, must go with me to the White House.

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

I could not carry on my administration unless I found him quarreling at my elbow whenever I turned my head."

"And if 'carry on' be the name of it, who is to carry on my farms?" I asked.

This I put seriously; it stood much to the left hand of any programme of mine, this making one of the General's White House family.

"Who will carry on your farms?" repeated the General. "Why, then, who is to carry on mine? Do you mean that you, who have put me here, are about to desert me? Nonsense, man; there is no room in your body, big as it is, for so gross a treason. If I stay, you stay; and that's nailed down."

"And surely you wouldn't abandon me?" said Peg, bringing her pretty face something near to my shoulder. Then, low and pleading: "Me; with trouble frowning?"

Who was there to stand up against both Peg and the General? I made no breathless battle of it, you may guess.

"Major, I've been telling this child," said the General, laying his thin hand on Peg's curly mop of hair, "how at our receptions she'll light up that great East Room with the bright face of her. We shall require all the beauty we can muster, since the administration is like to go limping in the business of looks. Van

Buren and Barry are wifeless; and I'm told Mrs. Ingham is forbiddingly hideous, with the voice of a henhawk. You see, my child," turning to Peg, "we build on you to save our day from the sin of ugliness."

Peg's eyes danced, and she seemed to bask in prospects naught save sunshine. She was far from that broken one of sobs and sorrows whose hand I held a short half hour before. A great woman is ever a great actress; Peg was proving it now; for with a face all light, her heart was a heart of shadows, and heavy with the forebode of dark days coming down. What a paradox is woman! Here was Peg, brave at once, and fearful—afraid for her husband, while quick with courage for him, finding her peril where she found her strength.

"We are living," remarked Eaton, as he tucked Peg under his arm preparatory to their departure, "we are living on the Georgetown side of the President's Square. General, we won't, while you are in the White House, have a far journey when we visit you. Major, you must call on us."

"Indeed, you must!" echoed Peg.

As the two took their leave, and the General, having bowed the little lady to the door, sought his never-failing pipe, Jim reappeared, and with a caution that bordered upon mystery

PEG'S MEETING WITH THE MAJOR

quietly placed a penciled note in my hand. It read :

"Mr. Noah presents his compliments to the Major ; and will the Major do Mr. Noah the honor to meet him immediately in the card room ? It is considered advisable by Mr. Noah to say nothing to the General concerning this message."

The note went into my pocket, the General, luckily involved with his pipe, which for some stubbornness concealed within the stem refused to draw, failing to notice. This was as should be, for the General was as inquisitive and prompt with query as a girl. Even now he asked where I was bound.

"I've had nothing to eat as yet," I returned.

"That's true ; I had forgotten. Come back when you are finished ; there's a deal to talk about. I shall need you to help me make up my mind."

"Help you unmake it, you mean," I replied.

There was an exchange of grins. I had exactly stated the case ; and, as a grave truth will on occasion, it struck our sense of the ridiculous. It had been my work for years ; it would be my work for the eight years yet to come ; this unmaking of the General's mind.

On my way to the card room I asked Jim,

who was close behind, where he got the sage.

"Marse Major, Jim done obtains it that red-head Jew gentleman I sees rom: 'round yere this mornin'. An' say, Marse jor; don't you-all reckon Jim better skuff your room an' fotch your box of pistols?

"Pistols!" I exclaimed, stopping s "what in the name of General Jackson want of pistols?"

"Oh, nothin', Marse Major, jest not said Jim, shifting uneasily on his feet. simply one of them old-time Cumberland of Jim's. D' fac' is, Marse Major, Jim o' allows from d'signs how dish yere red Jew gentleman's gwine to have a fight."

CHAPTER IV

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

Jim's surmise of trouble on the brew set fire to my feet. At the door of the card room I met Duff Green coming out—Duff of the Oporto nose. I barely nodded; I could taste of insincerity and a suave false slyness on the man as one smells secret fire in a house.

As I pushed into the card room, while it was well filled of folk, my first glance revealed nothing to justify Jim's fears. There was Noah, truly; and sitting with him that Kentucky Yankee, the anxious Amos Kendall. Isaac Hill, gray and thin, and limping with his club-foot, was also about. These were the General's friends; there was naught to anticipate of a misunderstanding with Noah from them.

And for all that, Jim was right; calm as showed the surface, there ran an undertow of conversation which flowed for storm. Jim, who lived long among fighting men on fighting ground, had attained perhaps some sharpened sense for the sign or sound of approaching strife, and could foretell it while yet a mile away.

Kendall was by Noah's side, and Hill had paused at his elbow; yet it was with neither of these he was engaged. Against the corner of a mantelpiece, and two paces from Noah, leaned a young man of dissolute look. His name, I learned, was Catron, and he came from Port Tobacco, a small hamlet in the southern toe of Maryland. Evidently, Catron was of an upper class in his country, as his dress, and fine hands, smallish and unmarred of toil, would give a signal. He had been drinking, but seemed more vicious than drunk.

Catron was doing the talking, and with a manner of itself an insult seemed bent for altercation.

"Don't cross the run of things," warned Noah, in a whisper, as I marked my advent by dropping a hand upon his shoulder; "I am glad you are come; but don't interfere. Affairs go famously."

Willing to gain some insight of the trend of traffic, I paused behind Noah's chair.

"That I should cross words," Catron was saying, "with a Jackson Jew does not tell in favor of my respectability. It is what one must look for, however, when the beggars of politics are promoted to the saddle."

"Your epithet of 'Jackson Jew,'" responded Noah, quietly, "I take for myself,

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

and am much flattered thereby. And you are also to remember there are weapons other than words which one may cross with me whenever one's valor arouses to that pitch. Jew, yes! my ancestors were poets, lawgivers—they read the stars, and collected the wisdom and the learning of the world, when the slant-skulled fore-fathers of upstairs I might indicate went clothed of sheepskin and club, ate their meat raw, and saved their fire to pray to."

All this flowed from Noah in tones modulate and sweet. I began to wonder at my fair-haired friend; not unskilled in colloquy of this sort, it beat upon me that Noah, himself, was wanting an encounter.

"If I were to own my way," said Catron, paying no heed to Noah's intimation of a stone-age savagery as the state of his forebears, "if I might have my way, I'd exclude every shoe-lace Jew from the country."

"Doubtless; if you were to have but your own way," purred Noah. "And yet, observe the injustice you propose. The Jew is as much the American as you. My father fought for this country; I have fought for it; the Jews found and gave one-third of that money which won the Revolution. The Jews wasted their

treasure and their blood like water for independence, while folk one wots of were filling the roles of Royalists and upholding the hands of the King."

There now fell out a deal of talk to little purpose, I thought, and I was on the tip of telling Noah so, when someone from over my shoulder flung a remark.

"You are he," said this man—his name was Witherspoon, and he a Clay Kentuckian—"you are he," addressing Noah, "who had this country stricken from the muster of Christian nations. You caused the Bey of Tunis to make the decision."

"I but caused the Bey to expound our constitution," said Noah, looking carelessly back at Witherspoon.

While I was turning these last remarks in my mind, and gnawing the enigma they offered, Catron broke forth with a cataract of malediction upon the General, and Noah and any and all who stood the former's supporters. It was a flood of abuse that told strongly for the ruffian's muddy powers.

"And now this precious Jackson of yours,"—these were Catron's closing words—"this murderer! this thief of other men's wives! would insult the decency of our capitol with a courtesan in his cabinet."

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

"Meaning whom?" asked Noah, half rising.

Noah's words had the fiber of triumph; he put his question as might he who had trapped that result which he went seeking from the start.

"Who?" retorted the other; "who, save that Peg O'Neal who was as common as the streets she walked."

"You lie; you rogue and dog of Henry Clay, you lie!"

Noah fair spat out the words; it was as though they came freighted with the venom of the viper.

Catron growled an oath and leaped towards Noah. He was met flush in the face with a glass of whiskey which Noah in most casual fashion had just poured. I had foreseen Noah's purpose; I'd heard him say he drank no spirits.

For the moment Catron was stopped, the bite and anguish of the alcohol in his eyes making him as a blind man. As Noah threw the liquor, I seized him by the wrist; so far it had been gentleman's work; I did not want him to spoil his position by throwing the glass.

"Don't grip so hard," warned Noah, making not the least of struggle; "don't grip so hard. I shall anon need this hand for what

is in store; that grasp like a hand-vise will weaken it for a sword, or shake it for a pistol."

Never was I more played upon and pleased than by the coolness of Noah, who showed as steady, not to say indifferent, as he who acts a part in a theater.

"I shall have your life for this!" screamed Catron, who, in the hands of friends and still blind of the whiskey, was carried to another room.

When something like peace fell, I asked Noah to explain. I would understand this violence; the more since it looked to be half-plan on Noah's part. Kendall and Hill were with us and made four for our conversation.

"What is the riddle, then?" I said. "I got your note; what was it you desired?"

"Nothing, save your presence," he replied. "As you observe, I was provoking a fight—not a most amiable attitude, I confess. But you will hear my reasons. Since I saw you, I have found how there exists a clique of bloods—they are of both the Clay and Calhoun parties—who go about grossly assailing Mrs. Eaton. There is concert in their villainy; and they relax themselves at intervals with threats of violence against any who shall take Mrs. Eaton's part. A duel—a prompt, sharp duel,

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

with a wound or two—is the best, in truth! the only way to stifle them. There is nothing like steel or lead to teach such gentry mildness and a Christian spirit.”

Noah laughed over the adjective.

“And have you put yourself forward,” I demanded, “as that master who is to give these lessons of lead and steel?”

“What could be better?” returned Noah. “I am cold and steady, and not apt for error. Again, I am of no such overt and particular emphasis in the General’s designs as to link his name too much with this ruffle. Since it is to be, I think I am excellently the hand for the work; and I hold it fortunate I am here when I so dovetail with events.”

“And what is to come?” said I.

“Indubitably, a challenge,” broke in Kendall. “The Maryland Catrons are of touchwood stock. They duel for their pleasure.” Then with an inflection of warning. “This Catron will ask for swords!”

“Swords should do exceeding well,” remarked Noah. “It should go through sharply, this affair, for the best moral effect on others of his ill-tongued clan. With swords we might fight in a room, since they make no noise. Let us meet at once. In an hour this Catron’s

eyes will cease to burn, and he'll see the better for it."

"But, mind you, Catron is a master of the sword," said Kendall. "He had the best teachers in Florence."

"Should he show you my blood," returned Noah, coldly, "I will avouch him the best fencer of America."

There would be a duel, so much I could tell. And yet the situation put me to deepest thought. I was sorry for Peg's name in it, too; that would mean no end of talk.

"There is no end of talk as it stands," argued Noah. "It were best to make Mrs. Eaton's fame the issue. I could have forced a quarrel on his insults for that I was a Jew. But I hold it better as it is. Mrs. Eaton was the one question worth duelling with such a bully about; but for the duel to be of suppressive virtue, it is required to have the *casus belli* surely shown."

Noah was profoundly right in these arguments; the next day's sequel of silence on the cautious parts of our anti-Eaton swashbucklers remarked as much.

"You speak of this Catron as a bully," commented Hill. "I know nothing of your code, for it does not obtain in New Hampshire."

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

But is a gentleman bound to take notice of the vapors of a bully—a mere blackguard?"

"One may be a bully," returned the steady Noah, "and none the less patrician for that. Indeed, your prince oft takes his purple blood for license. Who was Alcibiades but a bully-boy of Athens? Who have been the bullies of London town, with their Mohocks and Hell Fire Clubs, but the nobility and royal princes? No, believe me, sir;" and Noah's lip twitched sarcastically, "the bully's blood is sometimes blue."

It was settled that I should second the interests of Noah. At a first blink, this arrangement might have the look of the General's fat in the fire, since we professed anxiety to keep his name clear of the muddle. But there are two ends to a lane; our purpose was attained when the General's want of personal knowledge found demonstration. That plain, it was next good to have it understood how the Jackson interest was at the Noah shoulder. These reasons, and because I owned experience of such arbitrments—for I had lived where pistols, barking at ten paces, were rife enough—taught Noah his preference for me over Kendall and Hill, who had seen fewer of these bickers, the latter none at all.

"They will be the challenging party," I

observed to Noah; "that gives us the choice of arms."

"Should Kendall be right," said Noah, "as to the Florentine studies of our friend, he will prefer swords. Suppose you concede swords on condition he fight at once."

Even while we conferred, there came Pigeon-breast, my friend of the clanking saber and gold heels, to wait upon us. The sight of me as sponsor for Noah caused Pigeon-breast a dubious start; possibly he feared lest the General resent his presence as the avowed ally of the enemy. Indeed poor Pigeon-breast expressed his thought.

"It is to be hoped," faltered Pigeon-breast, in his high-pitched tenor, "you will represent me, sir, in certain quarters you know of, as acting solely for the honor of my friend. My personal position as to the subject matter of the quarrel must not be deduced from that."

I maintained myself with gravity, as folk about a litigation of honor should; also, I set Pigeon-breast easy on risks and perils for himself. In the matter of weapons Pigeon-breast fair fell upon my neck.

"It is for you to name weapons," quoth Pigeon-breast. Then, with hesitation: "If it

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

meet your view, however, we for our side would welcome swords."

"And that is a highly improper remark, permit me to say." My attitude was purposely severe. It would throw Pigeon-breast into confusion. "Since the choice is with us, it is neither graceful nor safe for you to try to lead it."

"Surely," protested Pigeon-breast, "I meant no unfairness, no offence. But with swords, sir, this might come quietly off in town. Should you say pistols, it will mean Bladensburg; and the mud is girth deep."

At the word "mud," poor Pigeon-breast gazed upon his varnished boots and bandbox regimentals with round eyes of apprehension. I took advantage of Pigeon-breast's solicitude and feminine terror of Bladensburg mire to say that if we might have our men up at once, it would tell strongly in favor of swords. Of course, my haste was to have the thing finished before some waifword of it reached the General's ear.

"Why, I believe an hour from now," said Pigeon-breast, hopefully, "might suit us extremely well. That would make it sharp noon. Shall we say noon?"

"And the ball room at Gadsby's?" I returned. Having considered, I deemed it best

to be out of the Indian Queen with this clash. Gadsby's was to the taste of Pigeon-breast; it would serve admirably. Also, Pigeon-breast would bring a brace of rapiers.

Thus was it adjusted between the militant Pigeon-breast and myself. Pigeon-breast withdrew, giving me a most sweeping bow; but carefully keeping his hand to himself, by which I saw that he was not unversed in the etiquette of the field.

Returning to Noah, I laid before him our arrangements; incidentally, I would get a morsel of food, since I had had none that morning, and my stomach was much inclined to take this neglect in dudgeon.

Having a private parlor to ourselves, for Kendall and Hill would lunch with me, I sent for what we craved and urged dispatch. The repast was brought, and while we did it honor with knife and fork, Noah sipped a thimbleful of sherry, saying he accepted it to quicken the eye and give vigor and pliancy to the wrist.

As we lunched, Noah called for a messenger.

"Find Mr. Rivera," said Noah; "bring him to me here."

There was a question on my tongue; it covered the charge tossed over my shoulder by the man, Witherspoon, that Noah had fixed

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

the country's status as a nation of heathen among the powers of the earth.

"The statement is true," said Noah; "the story is brief. It was during the last war, and while I represented the country in Tunis. A Yankee privateer, little but valiant, came into port towing a hulking English merchantman, whereof, cutlass in hand, he had made prize. The Yankee would have the merchantman condemned in the courts of Tunis, and sold. The British minister objected; he recalled the Bey, before whom we both appeared, to his treaty made with England. One clause precluded the use of Tunis as a port of condemnation for English ships made prize in wars between England and any other 'Christian nation.' The phrase was 'Christian nation.' There was no going about the treaty; it stood in ink and sheepskin. Whereupon I read the learned Bey—himself a darkened pagan—our constitution. I showed him we were not a 'Christian nation,' but admitted every creed or sect or sept or faith of men, Gentile or Jew or Musselman, and all on common terms. It was impossible we should be a 'Christian nation;' the treaty with England did not in this instance tie his hands. The Bey held with me; America was not a 'Christian nation;' the prize was condemned and sold. The Bey would receive

one-fifth of the proceeds of that sale; which may or may not have aided his wisdom to the decision I've described. Still, it was a decision; and since it never has been quarreled with or overturned, a heathen country we remain to this day in the eye of international law."

As Noah ended his scrap of history, a tall young man, square and heavy of shoulders, and with every movement of his body as smoothly sure and sinuous as the movements of a cat, appeared. He was that Rivera for whom Noah had sent.

"Go to my rooms and bring me a pair of swords," said Noah.

"The smallswords?" asked Rivera, with just a thought of interest.

"No; the Spanish swords."

"Who is your armorer?" I asked of Noah when Rivera was gone.

This boy I had come across before. He had drawn himself upon my attention by the panther grace and strength told of in his motions. Large, long of limb, and heavy, there was yet a brisk lightness with him to hold one like a spell.

"His name," responded Noah, "is Rivera—Michael Rivera—and his blood flows a fantastic, almost a formidable mixture. His mother

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

was a maid of my mother; an Irish lass she was, and came out of Tipperary. The father, on the far other hand, was a Spanish Jew; by trade a bull-fighter, the foremost toreador of Seville, where, when my family was visiting in Spain, the impressionable Tipperary maiden lost her heart to him as he flourished bloodily about the arena. They were married by the padre, for Rivera senior, while pure Jew, was none the less pure Catholic; under Spanish law he could have had no place among the bull-fighters else, since in Spain it is not permitted to be cruel unless one first be Christian. My protegee, who goes for the swords, is the fruit of that union; now, his parents being dead, and because he was born among my people, he abides with me. He has a drowsy, honest soul—though hot enough when moved—and he loves me. He would accept death for me like a dog.”

“And what is his part with you?” asked Kendall. The tale of Rivera interested us.

“No part,” responded Noah, “more than to go where I go, and come where I come; to fetch and to carry and to do my word. He is well taught of books; but owns ideas not at all, for he has no width nor current of conjecture. Yet you are not to believe him a fool. He is silent, but blithe to

obey, and true as blade to hilt. I keep him, for he would have otherwise no support. If I turned him on the world, he could not make a dollar—nor guard it if he should. In that fiscal particular, the Jew in him has balked and broken down.” Noah laughed lightly. “The faithful Rivera,” he went on, “has, however, certain advantages. There is a compensation, an equilibrium, in nature. Rivera, slow of brain, possesses the muscle-power of a Hercules; moreover, in those twin arts of boxing and wrestling, it’s to be doubted if his over-lord exists. Some day, in some moment of brutality—being now and again overtaken of such—I shall have Rivera to England to beat Bendigo and Ward. The prize-ring is his one opening for eminence. And I—as does the immortal Byron, who has more pride of fisticuffs than verse—applaud the ring.”

While Noah talked, I was yielding him my meed of tacit admiration. Here was a man, a creature of quills and ink, too, within minutes of meeting, edge to edge, with one keen of his weapon, and a declared adept among sword fighters. And clearly, the business was no more upon his spirit than if the day bore no grim promise, but only smiles. It was more than courage, it was the absolute absence of fear; he leaned back with his sherry, and the little

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

story of his young Spanish Irish-Jew, as though hate were not at that same moment of time whetting a rapier with hope against his life. His foreclaim of being cold and steady was not a boast which wanted feet to stand upon.

Rivera came back, bearing the swords wrapped from casual eye in the folds of a cloak. I drew one—a plain rapier or Spanish sword—and of as superb temper as any to come from its birth-forge of Toledo.

“They are brothers, those swords,” said Noah; “there is none better. I had them from the hands of that Bey who branded us as heathen, and so fretted the friend of Henry Clay. And since, in a pastime such as we go about, a fullest confidence in one’s weapon is important, you will prefer these for me if the choice be given you.” This was spoken to me.

Rivera knelt down, and taking off his patron’s shoes, replaced them with light fencing slippers, whereof the soles crackled with a fresh coat of resin. Then came loose overshoes, meant to protect the others on the road to Gadsby’s from intervening mud. Having done this, and saying not a word whether of question or remark, the boy stood back as waiting the next command. I was ever reckoned a judge of anything on two legs or four, as became the best quartermaster the General ever had, and

I've yet to glimpse so perfect—so splendidly, so accurately perfect—an example of the physical man as showed in this youth, with his brown hair, brown eyes, dark skin, and round thick neck like the carved column of some sculptor.

It was time to be off for Gadsby's, no mighty journey, being just across the street. As we were about departing, Noah called to Rivera, who exhibited no more distrust of a finale than was present with the other, and observed: "I shall be hungry on my return. Have a fowl and a flask of wine set out for me in my own rooms."

Rivera bowed as one who understands; and giving me the cloak to be still a refuge for the Toledoes, watched us, as by a side door we got onto the walk and headed for Gadsby's over the way.

There were the four of us, Noah, Kendall, Hill, and myself, when we came into that great room of Gadsby's which was reserved for routs and dancing. It was a large and lofty room with a gallery all about. We had the place to ourselves for the moment; Pigeon-breast and his principal were yet to arrive upon the scene.

Noah kicked off the overshoes, and stepped and scrubbed his feet against the flooring boards. The experiment ended to his taste.

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

"The resin holds," he remarked. Then, glancing about the vast apartment, he came back to me with a smile: "It's like fighting in a ten-acre field," said he.

Pigeon-breast appeared by a far door. Besides his bully principal, there were two others, for I had named the propriety of witnesses and suggested the number. I crossed over and greeted Pigeon-breast, and then led him aside.

"Is either of the gentlemen with you," said I, "a surgeon?"

"Why, no," returned Pigeon-breast, "the thing clean slipped my mind."

"It might be well to send, then," I said, "for I think he will be wanted."

Pigeon-breast spoke to the others, who, with Catron between them, had continued near the door. Pigeon-breast, after a word, returned to me.

"There is a surgeon below," he reported; "he will be with us like winking, for he loves this kind of thing."

"And now the swords," I said. "We may as well transact preliminaries as far as we can go while waiting."

Pigeon-breast suggested we spin a coin, their weapons or ours. It fell for ours; a good omen, I thought, albeit a look at Noah, where

he gazed carelessly from a window, face immovable as granite, gave encouragement enough to declare war for a crown. I went over to tell him we had won the use of our Toledoes.

"That sounds well," he said. "I like good tools, especially when the work demanded leans upon the fine."

"You will not slay the man?" I asked.

"For the one matter of his life," returned Noah, "he's as safe as though this dancing room were a church. Beyond that, however, I shall take such measures with him that, for months, who sees him shall know what reward is waiting on cowards who vilify a pure girl."

Pigeon-breast signaled for a word. Taking me to a remote corner, he argued that our duties required we discuss the possibility of apology.

"They must fight a little first," I retorted. "There is no room between epithets such as 'rogue' and 'liar' to squeeze in an explanation. These folk must fight while both can hold out swords."

This was not butcher's taste; but I began to see, with Noah, that the mouths against us must be silenced,—at least the men. We would begin with Catron; we would duel our way through the social register, if need beckoned, to purchase that justice of silence for our Peg.

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

Poor Peg! she was not to lie helpless in every cur's mouth, to be torn at as most pleased his cruelty or best fattened his interest. The more the situation ran before me, the more my breast took fire; I sustained a strict face, however, engaged as I was upon the parade ground of honor and in the service of a gentleman. Still, I said enough, and said it in such fashion that Pigeon-breast, now a little nervous when the actual steel was about to be drawn, saw nothing for it but to bring forward his fellow. This, I admit, he managed in a genteel way; nor did Catron either whiten or lag backward, but stepped to his place as might he who is warm for vengeance. I did not like this Catron's looks; surely the creature was a black-guard with no right to name himself among gentlefolk, only so far as one might lie within the accident of decent birth. But he seemed stout enough of kidney, though that may have grown with a belief in his infallible craft of the sword.

We gave our men their arms; and as, stripped to their shirts, they stood apart, awaiting signal to engage, Noah put point to floor, and bearing hard upon the hilt, bent his blade double. Abruptly lifting his hand, the honest steel sprang straight, and the sword was tossed high in the air. As it fell, with the clear,

sureness of legerdemain, Noah caught it by the hilt. It was no more than a flourish of the fencing school, perhaps; but it served to hearten me mightily and to put me confident of victory. Neither was it wanting in effect, I may suppose, on the volatile Pigeon-breast and his man, Catron; I thought on their side it made somewhat for a certain seriousness of face.

Speaking now of the battle, I must warn you of my inability to tell the tale in nice and hair-line strokes. It was a notable fight, valorously sustained and fairly made; but indubitably it did not remain in one like myself—wholly ignorant of that fencing which pushes or stabs, and admirable with a saber no farther than striking a downright blow with the edge—to catch close work, and taste the merit of it. I have no more of fencing than of Sanscrit, and remember no work, of my own of that character beyond splitting an Indian's head like a pumpkin in a skirmish on the Tombigbee. I am strong of arm, and having the day before come across the long hair of seven white women, murdered at Fort Mimms, smoke-drying in the wigwams of a Creek village we sacked, I doubtless smote upon that savage with uncommon violence.

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

When the pair engaged, there were preliminary moments employed in feeling one another's strength. The swords kept up an incessant thin rasping, with an occasional singing note as they parted company for thrust or parry. Even my uneducated vision observed from the commencement how Noah held the better of it. His address was superior; and I should say that, with a stiffer wrist, he was withal the more falcon-like in assault, and readier of recovery.

Catron, by his brow of fury, meant death if he might only clothe his point for it. That was not to be. On the heels of a desperate stroke—it was fellow to a dozen that preceded it—which Noah foiled with blade describing a circle no bigger than a curtain-ring, Catron's flushed cheek faded to ghastly gray. For the moment I thought him touched; but no, it was but the sudden daunting conviction that he had met his master. This, breaking on him like the boom of a death-bell, and how his life stood now naked before one whom he had so provoked, ate the yolk from his courage like a weasel.

Catron foresaw his downfall before we who looked on might tell. And if I am to understand a gray, drawn face, then the news taught him the bitterness of death itself.

In the opening exchanges, Catron attacked. He was in and out with a hateful ferocity, thrusting and pressing, as one whose merest wish is murder. Noah gave backward not at all, but stood like a wall, risking all on eye and wrist. I could not catch the sleight of it, but again and again, as Catron thrust, I could see the lead-colored blade glimmer by Noah's side with not an open inch to give away. As Noah told me later, however, an inch in fencing is a wide margin.

Catron felt his strength slip from him; it was like the sands running from an hour-glass. But the rogue's heart summoned stoutness. Finding himself going, Catron must crowd the strife to an end before it ended him. He leaped back to get his distance; then without pause, and giving a sort of bellowing, roaring cry that may have been a scheme for terror, he sprang forward, sending on his point as straight as the stroke of a serpent.

What befell was like the lightning's flash; and no man's gaze, however trained to the trick of it, might follow. Noah did not parry, but stood aside from the other's point, which, passing, grazed his garments. Noah's point, in re-tort, entered Catron's sword arm just above the guard. I saw Noah hold his own hand high, and with point a bit lowered. From the sheer

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

forward plunge of the other, Noah ripped up his foe's arm—split it like a mackerel!—from wrist to shoulder. It was a gaping furrow of a wound; and the horrid shock of it, when Noah's steel caught in the shoulder bones, brought the wretched Catron to the floor. The blood ran away in a crimson rivulet from the prostrate one; and to tell the best and the worst of me, I've yet to look on blood, or anything besides, which brought me so much of comfort and of the sweetness of peace.

While the surgeon, needle and lint going, dealt with Catron, I conveyed Noah to the end of the room. We must await the report of yon fellow's condition; we could not leave the field without consent of Pigeon-breast—quite pale and stricken now, was Pigeon-breast, as he stood watching while the bandages were wound.

Following a nod of the surgeon's, Pigeon-breast came towards me. I met him on his way.

"The thing is ended," said Pigeon-breast; his voice came huskily, and in a fashion faint. "The thing is at an end. My friend can not hold sword."

"That is enough," said I.

"One word, sir," said Noah, coming forward, handkerchief all red where he had been cleaning his blade; "you are to take notice: I

from this day shall seek out with challenge each man who speaks evil of Mrs. Eaton. That creature who lies there, and whom, maugre his wound, I still condemn for the rogue and fetch-dog of Henry Clay I painted him, may be for warning."

"But has Mrs. Eaton no husband to fight for her?" sputtered Pigeon-breast, not relishing Noah's attitude.

"Let that go by," retorted Noah, sternly. "Your diplomacy shall not reach. Again I tell you, he who shall assail Mrs. Eaton with word or look, or who fails to please that lady with his conduct, replies to me. I wounded this one; I shall slay the next."

"What is this to be?" cried Pigeon-breast, appealing to me in a flutter of spiteful fright. "Is it that we have a bravo?"

"A bravo whom you are like to encounter, sir," I said, "unless you teach your tongue some prudence—you and your tribe."

"Sir, I would refuse to meet a bravo."

"Sir, you would meet the bravo or meet me." Then came a rush of temper about my heart. I thought on poor Peg; and a great anger began to flame in me. I glowered on the tinsel Pigeon-breast; then I thrust towards him my huge bear-paw hands. Pigeon-breast considered them, and the hairy wrists

THE JEW AND HIS SPANISH SWORD

like pistons, with a kind of interest of dismay. "Sir," said I, "the first foul dog among you who shall so much as take the name of that innocent one upon his lips, I'll find him out, and with the ruth one grants to rattlesnakes, I'll kill him with these fingers."

And so ended that blood letting which was meant to tie the tongue of slander and in a measure did.

"I shall leave it to you," observed Noah as we came away, "to place this affair before the President in a right light. His is the only judgment whose favor I would seek, and that, particularly, for that his name is certain to figure in the story of this bicker whenever it is told. I would not have him think I had rashly put him in peril of criticism."

"There should be no alarm on that score," I replied. "My word for it, the General will endorse with his full name every step we have taken."

On our return to the Indian Queen we found Rivera waiting, and a table spread in Noah's apartment as he had commanded. Rivera received the Spanish swords, still wrapped in the concealing cloak. He drew forth of its scabbard the blade which had armed Noah's hand; it still carried a stain or two of that Catron's blood, and Rivera's eye seemed to

fire with a sleepy satisfaction while he looked on it. Then he turned his gaze on his patron in a manner of inquiry.

"No, he will live," said Noah, as though in reply to a query put by his protege; "it was not to kill him that we went across the way."

At this news, Rivera took the Spanish swords and withdrew; and all with the evident purpose of putting them in order against a next campaign.

"I think," said I, as Noah drew up to the table—for it would seem that his work had given his appetite an edge, not dulled it—"I think I shall hunt up our friend the General. There is slight chance of any being before me; and yet I would make sure to bring him the earliest word of what has chanced."

Both Hill and Kendall would be for leaving, also, and as we three arose to go Noah filled a quartet of glasses with Burgundy. Offering one to each, he said: "Let us drink to the defeat, ay! even to the death of ones who would bear false witness against the innocent. May their best fate be no better than the fate of him whom we met to-day."

CHAPTER V

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

It was as good as a study of character, the varying fashions wherein those interested received the story of Noah's clash with Catron. There was nothing told of it in the paper, for the port wine Duff was wise withal, and suppressed whatever of hunger may have possessed him to print a palatable piece of news. The General might not approve such type-freedoms; Eaton would doubtless distaste a notoriety of this hue for Peg; indeed, there might be others of consequence whom it would disturb. The port wine Duff carried a gulping appetite for public printing; it might befall that to offend would get between the legs of his anticipations and trip them up. Wherefore, neither Noah, Catron, Pigeon-breast, nor myself, was granted the contemplation of his valor by the pleasing light of ink. I, myself, did not consider this a deprivation; nor did Noah; nor Catron, so far as one might hear. But the chagrined Pigeon-breast bewailed it. He was quite crestfallen, and among intimates

talked of the call for a court journal which should, like a similar imprint of St. James, delicately set forth the surprising deeds of our nobility.

It was I who gave the tale of that ball-room fight at Gadsby's to the General. He took it coolly; granted it, in sooth, a more quiet reception than I had hoped. The fair truth is, I was prepared for an explosion. I was pleasantly fooled; the General could not have displayed less temper had I related the breaking of a horse. And yet he made claim for slimmest detail; question after question on his part prolonged narration for an hour.

"It was the best that could be," said the General, revolving the tangle in his mind. "The great thing is to stop folk's mouths; and a duel well fought, and with the right individual, is, as Noah says, the way to construct such condition. I've known the killing in proper form of one man to remove a slander from the conversation of a whole county. Folk let it fall of themselves and never took it up again."

"This Catron," said I, "was a noted fighter and had been out before."

"Which is precisely," responded the General, "what makes the work worth while. Here was a berserk, celebrated as one most froth-

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

ingly prompt for blood. Now he is disposed of, it will tame your minor war-hawks. They'll not be half so ready; they may even surprise themselves with what they will hereafter forbear in favor of keeping the peace."

Eaton, strange to tell, was moved of anger against Peg's champion.

"Sir," said Eaton, bearing himself stiffly to Noah, "it is far to the wrong side of the regular that you should defend my wife. That is my privilege, sir; it does not rest with others."

"And that is true," returned Noah, politely; "but the situation was unusual. It was of crying importance to get the thing off before the President knew. Folk would criticise him sharply if he did not interfere for peace. Besides, had you been brought into the business, your foes would have torn your prospects to pieces with it. You must see, sir, that however just your quarrel, you could not ride into the cabinet on the back of a duel."

"Sir, I can better be out of a cabinet," said Eaton grimly, "than leave my honor to the swords of other men."

"You and I," returned Noah, turning distant, "disagree extremely. I can not charge myself with wrong. I should act my part upon were occasion to rise. You, however, are the

judge of your own injuries. And I shall be in town some time."

"Sir, I am glad to be told so," responded Eaton. "When I have more considered, I may send a word to you."

This wrong discourse I was ear-witness of, but in it bore no part. I was so stung with anger against Eaton, for that he would act the boor, and talk of calling folk out when he should be thanking them, I dared not trust myself with a syllable. I would have spoken nothing pleasant for Eaton, and that would be a wide flight from wise, and draw his horns my way. We were both too near the General to talk of a difference that would have broken everybody's dish. Moreover, Noah owned the wit and the wrist to very well care for his own fortunes.

"Why, the man is clean beside himself!" exclaimed the General, when he learned of Eaton's high heels. "What franchise could he pretend to for a quarrel with Noah? Noah's right to fight with whom he will, and for any reason: good to his own eyes and those of his adversary, is not to be impeached. Eaton has surprised me out of bounds! For myself, I'd as soon think of stepping between a man and his wife, as a man and his enemy. Sir, there are relations which are sacred! Eaton's great

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

love for Peg has blurred him; a husband is ever a bad judge of either his rights or his wrongs. I'll set Eaton to the properest view in this when we meet."

The General was scandalized in the face of Eaton's pose. But I did not go with his theory of its being love for Peg. It was offspring rather of a March-hare vanity that represented a good office for which it lacked the generosity to be grateful.

It would seem, however, that the General read Eaton a right lesson, for he made amends. He came blandly to Noah.

"I am told," he said, "by one whose friendship and whose judgment I never doubt, that I have behaved badly towards you. Permit me to offer my apologies. Also, I am to thank you for your service against that scoundrel."

Noah took Eaton's explanation in courtly spirit, and so the wrinkles were made smooth. I was relieved, though not pleased; I would have found no fault with Noah had he gone a ruder course.

"Where is this Catron?" asked Noah.

"As to that," replied Eaton, "I think myself qualified to answer. I sent to learn his condition, and with some purpose, so soon as he was able, of taking him up where you let go

of him. The word came back that he had quit the town."

It was Peg, however, who minded her debt to Noah. She went to him with wet eyes, and, without word, took his sword hand in both of hers and kissed it. Noah started back.

"That is too much," he cried. "It is I who will be now in arrears to you for the balance of my days."

It stood the day but one following the affair of Gadsby's, and I was comfortably in my own room engaged about my letters. If I were to bide with the General, and not immediately to see Nashville, then I must name a manager and put my plantations in some kind of command. There were to be missives from the General, also, and we had arranged to send them west on the next day by hand of a special express. It would take him six weeks, that horseman and his saddle-bags, with roads as they were, to win to Tennessee; we were then at some fever, you will understand, to have our mails concluded and riding on their way.

As I drove my quill rapidly across the pages, Jim was busy in the adjoining bedroom, giving a polish to my boots. Jim cheered himself over his labors with snatches of song.

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

As I wrote hard at my desk, I could hear him,
in a most lugubrious refrain :

Thar's a word to be uttered to d'rich man an' his pride;
(Which a man is frequent richest when it's jest befo' he died.)
Thar's a word to be uttered to d'hawg a-eatin' truck ;
(Which a hawg is frequent fattest when it's jest befo' he's stuck.)

"Cease that outlandish howling," I commanded furiously.

"Shore, Marse Major!" said Jim, coming into the room where I sat, and bringing one of my high horseman boots on his arm, polishing it the while with unabated ardor; "shore, Marse Major! An' yet, that's a mighty well liked song up an' down d'Cumberland. Hit's been made, that song is, by Miss Polly Hines; little Miss Polly who lives over on d'"Possom Trot. She makes it all about a villyun who comes fo'closin' 'round her paw's betterments for what he owes that Dudleyville bank, an' sellin' 'em off at public vandoo. Marse Major, you-all oughter listen to d'res' of that roundelay; if you'd only hear it plumb through, Jim sort o' reckons you'd like it."

I made no response, but kept on with my work. I was not to be moved of ballads as Jim rendered them, even though vouched to be the offput of that Sappho of the 'Possom Trot.

Ten minutes went racing by and Jim reappeared in the door.

"Say, Marse Major, do you-all recollects that gentleman who comes pesterin' about for them subscriptions, an' who d'Marse Gen'ral done skeers off d' time you an' me is goin' down to d'parlor to meet dish yere Missis Eaton?"

"Well, what about him?"

"He's been 'round ag'in to-day. It's this mornin' whiles you is sleepin', an' I runs up on him outside in d' hall, kind o' ha'ntin' about our door. I say: 'What you-all want?' He say: 'I want to see d'Marse Major.' With that I ups an' admonishes him that you-all is soun' asleep. 'An',' I says, 'it don't do to go keerlessly wakin' d'Marse Major up. He's got a monstrous high temper, that a-way, d' Marse Major has, an' all you has to do is rap on that door jes' once, an' he'll nacherally come boilin' outen bed, an' be down on you like a fallin' star; that's what he will.' Then I tells him he can't get no subscriptions from you no how; that you is a heap sight worse than d' Marse Gen'ral 'bout 'em. 'You hyar mel' I expostulates; 'you-all is simply barkin' at a knot; thar aint no sign of a raccoon up that tree at all. You-all might jes' as well try to get sugar-sap outen a swamp-beech as subscriptions outen d'Marse Major!' Shore, that's what Jim tell 'um."

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

"And for that, you miscreant, I'll give him a hundred dollars when he does come, to show him how little truth you tell."

"Don't go blazin' off into a fandad, Marse Major," said Jim, reprovingly, "throwin' your money away. Dish yere gentleman 'sponds to Jim, an' allows he aint aimin' at no subscriptions. But he do say he want to see you; an' so I tell him to be back ag'in in five hours. He's liable to come buttin' in yere any minute now, as d' time Jim sots is done arriv'."

As if for endorsement, a knock was heard at the door.

There were two to enter, a man and a woman. The man was huge of frame, shambling, uncouth, with knobby joints and large uncertain feet; his face flabby, sickly, with little greedy, shifty eyes, like the eyes of swine; gross mouth, full lipped and coarse, and working and munching in a full-fed way, engaging itself upon imaginary mouthfuls. The hands of this individual were puffy, warty members, with palms as hot and wet and soft as an August swamp, and, save for their temperature, much like the belly of a toad to the feel. These hands were commonly in motion, making plausible and deprecatory gestures. It was as though the world were a cat and they would stroke its back by way of conciliation. Over

all was obsequiousness like a veil—my visitor seemed to sweat subserviency, exhale abasement as an atmosphere. The woman, thin, and bird-faced, and with beaky nose that looked as though the frost had pinched the neb, was of the chattering, empty, magpie flock; she appeared as vulgar as the man; albeit, not with his obsequiousness, since she affected the girlish, and stood ready with giggle and gurgle and arch look, all of which but poorly fitted with her sober fifty years. From an odor of pulpits observable, I thought him a preacher; also, I took the woman to be his wife.

The man—I will thus far defend him—was not, however, that subscription person whom Jim remembered with the General.

"Dish yere's d'gentleman who is done been tecterin' 'round our door this mornin'," said Jim, as he ushered the visitors.

"It is not the gentleman who called on the General," I remarked.

"Well, what's d'diffrunce, anyhow?" asked Jim with mighty unconcern. "He's a preacher, so it's all d'same."

"No difference, perhaps," I returned, "except to make plain how little you are to be relied on."

"I s'ppose Jim's as cap'ble of mistakes as anybody." Here Jim lapsed into the abused

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

tone of one virtuous, and driven to the desperate by ill-usage. "But I tells you-all, Marse Major; since you done locks up that demijohn, Jim aint been d'same niggah. His mem'ry has sort o' begun to bog down. No wonder Jim gets folks swapped 'round foolish in his mind."

While these reproofs were going, my callers stood by the door, inviting consideration with much bending of the body and bowing of the head.

"I am the Reverend Campbell," began the man; "I am pastor of a precious flock in this town. And this is Deborah, my beloved consort. I trust I find all well and holy here, and the blessing of the Spirit upon this place?"

Then the Reverend Campbell re-began his abject bowing, while his magpie wife smirked and giggled sociably.

It had been long since I met folk who more repelled me. For the sake of his cloth, however, and the real respect I bore it, I required myself to assume a manner of cordiality. I asked the purpose of the visit.

"It was my privilege," responded the Reverend Campbell, with a meeting-house snuffle that certain divines adopt as a professional manner of articulation, "I may say it was my inestimable privilege some years back,

to behold in the body of the church, during many of my preachments, that mighty man of war, our coming president, and his sweet lady; although she—for flesh is as grass—has since perished and passed over to dwell among the blest.”

“Mrs. Jackson was my nearest, dearest friend,” simpered the awful magpie wife, interrupting. “It was when General Jackson had a seat in the senate. We were like loving sisters, Mrs. Jackson and I.”

This last I distrusted, but I did not say so.

“You are the General’s old preacher?” I said; the Reverend Campbell meanwhile seesawing and bowing, and locking and unlocking his warty fingers. “Have you been in to meet the General?”

“Not yet, good sir, not yet,” replied the Reverend Campbell. “That shall be in good time. Since you abide on terms of intimacy with our coming president, I deemed it prudent to first make myself known to you. Knowing David, I would know Jonathan. There is a business—a piece of sinful, worldly business—I would inquire of, a boon I would ask, and ere I went to the transaction thereof, I held it sapient to call upon you who will be so strong to bind or loose—so potent, as one might say, in the coming dispensation of preferments.”

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

The Reverend Campbell—who should have been a mandarin for his repulsiveness and talents to bow—kept up his bending, while the magpie wife in vacuous vanity, beamed on like a tarnished sun. To put a stop to the bowing, which began to grow on me nervously, I bade the pair be seated. They would remain the longer, but I would save myself with less of irritation.

“I do not come for myself,” observed the Reverend Campbell, snuffling, and balancing uneasily on his chair’s edge. His wife had taken her seat with more of confidence; spreading her skirts to advantage, and leaning back as one certain of results. “No, it is by request of a beloved brother in Christ, the Reverend Doctor Ely of Philadelphia. Our great Chief Magistrate knows him and loves him well.”

Then the Reverend Campbell went on in pulpit tones to elaborate his mission. It soon declared itself to be the old Duff Green errand of office angling. Also, it was a coincidence something strange, I thought, when the Reverend Campbell, following in the very foot-prints of the wine colored Duff, spoke of the Florida Governorship, and named the same wealthy zany for its occupation.

“He is a Pennsylvania Westfall,” concluded the Reverend Campbell, his breath bated and

his air impressed, "he is a Pennsylvania Westfall, and extremely rich of this world's goods. Doctor Ely desires this post for him with all his heart; he believes, moreover, that his old friend, our excellent president, who—and heaven be thanked!—is less than a scant two weeks away from his inauguration, will be glad to pleasure him in this regard. You might, sir, hint to that eminent statesman and soldier how his friend, Doctor Ely, would profit by this selection, going, as in that event he will, to St. Augustine, to be chaplain for the then Governor Westfall."

"And my husband, too, would be called to Dr. Ely's place in Philadelphia," gurgled the magpie wife; "it's a much richer church than the one here."

There, then, was the cat out of the bag; I had been guessing for some moments in the dark, as to why the Reverend Campbell should so zealously be fishing for office when he ought to be fishing for souls. The magpie wife granted me a glint of his secret. It did not swell my fund of respect for the Reverend Campbell, a fund nothing rotund as things stood.

"You should see the General," I said at last. "These are not my affairs; I would not presume, wanting his invitation, to advise with

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

him concerning them. You should see him; or, if you will, you might wait until Van Buren arrives."

"Ah, yes; the coming Secretary of State," remarked the Reverend Campbell, while his thick lips munched unpleasantly. "Will Mr. Van Buren make the Florida selection?"

I was driven to say I thought not; the General himself had been once Governor of Florida; therefore, he might believe he was the one better qualified to make such appointment.

Beholding the Reverend Campbell in the throes of doubt, tipping on his chair, and looking with his black clothes not a little like a crow hesitating on a fence-rail as to whether or no he will plump down among the sprouting corn, I suggested,—to relieve myself, I fear—that now he was come, he might better go in to the General and offer his request. I entertained no thought of success for him; I had not forgotten the fate in that connection of the porsy Duff—Duff of the ripe, ripe nose. But I aimed at a riddance of the Reverend Campbell and his leering, bubbling helpmeet; and I was not so loyal to the General as to prevent me from earning my own release by betraying him into their talons.

"Do you deem it the part of sagacity,"

said the Reverend Campbell, following a thoughtful pause, "to crave this boon at once?"

"Sagacious? surely!" I would have given my word for anything to work free of the Reverend Campbell and that magpie wife, the latter gentlewoman being rusty of plume, strident, and of but a sorry favor of face; to say nothing about her gigglings and chucklings; for that vacant dame was like a parrot, with a running rattle of vocalisms, going from gurgle to chirp, as an accompaniment to whatever was said by her lord and master.

"Then let us repair to him," said the Reverend Campbell, raising his hands as if asking a benediction on me and my belongings; "let us hie to him and unbosom ourselves, and may we find him in grace of spirit and well of this mortal body."

We discovered the General in his rooms. We found him in a rather merry spirit for him. He was sitting by his fire, with Peg on a footstool at a corner of the fireplace.

Hearing of the General's diet of rice, Peg's mother—she lived over to the south, across that wooded strip, the Mall—holding herself to excel in certain elixirs and cordials and draughts marvelous for maladies stomachic, had sent to the General's relief a bottle

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

of medicine warranted of transcendent merit, and in which dandelion flourished a dominant element. The good lady would trust her drugs to none save Peg; there she was, then, the fairest foot and hand ever to be sent on porter's work or to run an errand with a message.

The unexpected sight of Peg sent over me a wave of pleasure. I love the beautiful, have an inborn joy of it, and who or what could be more lovely than our Peg—Peg with her wildrose face?

The General glanced up through the tobacco smoke wherewith the rooms were cloudy. Peg had said she loved smoke, and could stand to it like a side of bacon. His look was of half-recognition as it settled upon my company.

"The Reverend Campbell, is it not?" said he.

"The same, Mr. President," returned the other, commencing again those bowing motions which had so tortured my soul, his flabby cheeks the while exuding a beady dew; "the same. And here is Deborah, my well-beloved wife, Mr. President."

The magpie one of rumpled feather gained indication by the Reverend Campbell pointing to her with a bulbous forefinger that was some-

what suffering about the nail for lack of care. The magpie one gave the usual proof of her satisfaction with chirp and giggle.

"The last time I beheld you, Mr. President," said the Reverend Campbell, "you and your dear wife sat beneath my words." The General flinched as though a rude hand touched a wound. He gathered himself, however. "That dear one, Mr. President, has gone from our midst. It is a chastening, Mr. President. Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. It is a loss, Mr. President, but we must summon meekness of spirit. Blessed are the meek in spirit, saith the singer, and they shall inherit the earth. Mr. President, let us pray."

The Reverend Campbell rolled forth the foregoing, and never halt or pause; with the last word he was down upon his knees, expanding into a gale of prayer.

It is not for me to pass upon such sacred petitions, but the Reverend Campbell's effort grated on my conscience as crude, and, if the term be not improper, vulgar. The General, who was still in his chair, bowed head in hand and sat silent throughout. He made neither sign nor sound; and yet it must have galled him like musketry, that prayer.

It was when the Reverend Campbell stood again on his feet, and the magpie one had re-

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

arranged her feathers, that their glances took in Peg where she now stood near the fire. She was silent, collected, and her calm look rested upon the Reverend Campbell and the magpie one. It was a steady glance of unseeing indifference and unacquaintance, and as though the pair were strangers to her.

Their actions, however, would smack of something nearer. No sooner did they behold Peg, than with one impulse they started towards her, faces a garden of smiles.

"Why, my dear Mrs. Eaton!" cried the magpie one.

"My dear, recovered lamb!" exclaimed the Reverend Campbell.

The two made for Peg with exuberant hands extended. Peg waved them off.

"You make a mistake," said Peg. Her words took flight evenly and with nothing of disturbance. "I do not know you." Then, as the Reverend Campbell and his magpie love seemed but half checked: "And I will not know you."

These closing words were vibrant of a nipping vigor, and Peg's leopard teeth came together with a click, and, as it were, for emphasis. Peg turned to me:

"Will you take me to my carriage?"

With that, the General arose and cavaliered Peg to the door.

"Give my thanks to your good mother, child," said the General, his fond eye pleasant with the reflection of Peg's pretty face; "tell her I shall profit by her kindness. I feel half restored with merely having the Dandelion Water on my shelf."

Closing the door after us, the General returned to the Reverend Campbell and his magpie love.

"There is no story with it." Peg replied, when I put those queries the situation suggested. "They are folk of treachery; that is it. They have been my persecutors as much as any. And with more shame for them, since they have pretended friendship for my family, and had support from my father for year piled upon year."

"And is that the whole of it?" I asked.

"Truly, it is, my best dear friend." Peg held up her pansy face, and offered me a cheerful look by way of proof. "Nor am I even a trifle provoked. For all that, I would not permit them because they found me with the good General, and with you"—she gave my arm a little pressure—"and doubtless would offer some request, to put on a false face, and so use me for their interest. I owe them no such

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

tenderness. Besides, since I've found real friends,"—Peg crowded to my side more closely, and bent upon me her kind, unfathomed eyes, as though admitting my protection,—“since I've found real friends, I've no room in my heart for mocking imitations.” Peg laughed her witch-laugh now, and stepped on more quickly. “Don't let us talk of them,” she said, “don't let us talk of such hollow folk!”

Peg's carriage stood at the curb. Indeed, she had but just arrived when, as I piloted the Reverend Campbell and the magpie, I found her by the General's fire.

“Some day you must go with me to meet my mother,” said Peg; “I've promised her.” Then, as I lifted her into the carriage, “Mercy! you should practice for a lighter hand. I feel as one in the paws of a bear.”

With a wave of her hand, she was off for the President's Square where her home stood; I, on my part, turned back to the General, walking slowly, and seeing Peg's gentle eyes before me all the way to his door. Sweet Peg! had it been I, no tawdry ambition of politics would have divided my heart with you; you would have reigned over it alone; we would have left Washington to the vermin who de-

voured it, and made our kingdom in lands of peace and truth!

It was not without relief I discovered that the Reverend Campbell, with his magpie mate, was gone.

"Assuredly, no!" exclaimed the General, when I inquired whether the name of Doctor Ely, and the petition preferred of the Reverend Campbell, had re-colored his thoughts touching St. Augustine and the Florida Governorship; "assuredly, no! He who has that place from me must be emphatically two things—a man and a friend. The creature, Westfall, is emphatically neither. I can not guess, however, in what this sudden office-hunting excitement of our ghostly fathers finds its source. I asked the Reverend Campbell, was this Westfall known to him. He said, only by repute; that he urged the case at the request of Doctor Ely."

Clearing him on that question of purpose, I told the General of Doctor Ely's arrangement to be a Governor's chaplain in St. Augustine; and how, in a moment of gurgling exaltation concerning what might be, that unguarded magpie exposed the scheme of "calling" our Reverend Campbell to Doctor Ely's fat present pulpit, should it become vacant in favor of palms and orange groves.

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

"And in that way runs the road!" exclaimed the General, full of leniency and amusement. "The preachers are becoming better politicians every day. Major, you and I must look to our lines, or some dominie may yet turn our flanks."

Then I gave the General what Peg had told of her attitude, like a diminutive iceberg, towards the Reverend Campbell and his magpie partner.

"They have done Peg no actual harm," I said. "They passed her by one day, like the Levites they were and are; and now she revenges herself."

"One can always hear the savage stirring about in Peg," commented the General; "and I like her the better for it. I love your revengeful soul—he who has a long knife, a long memory, and will go a long trail to his feud."

"And that is an excellent observe," I said, teasing him a bit, "and you a Christian and a president!"

"The observe, as you phrase it," retorted the General, "is not only excellent but earnest. Revenge is the fair counterpart of gratitude. They are off the same bolt of cloth. Find me a soul for revenge, and I'll find you a soul to be grateful. What are revenge and gratitude,

when one goes to the final word, but just a man paying his debts?"

"Who is this Doctor Ely?" I asked. "The Reverend Campbell described him as your friend."

"Doctor Ely is no more than an acquaintance, and hardly that. I met him years ago in Philadelphia; and I've heard him preach. He is a showy, fashionable figure of man; not deep, yet musical and fluent. The women, I remember, liked his discourses right well. There were a beat and a march to his periods; and albeit, while he talked, the wise ones went to sleep, others with music-boxes for minds, and who mistook sensation for sense, sat bolt upright, feeling the liveliest delight."

"I've met the latter sort," I assented; "the gentry who prefer rhyme to reason."

"Somehow," observed the General, following an interval of silence, "I ever fear I'll be unfair to your preachers. My inclination is to judge them too harshly—estimate them below their worth. It has been ever the fault of military men to do this, and, for myself, I would guard against it."

"And now will you explain what you are talking about?" I was in cold earnest, for the General's remorse over an injustice to preachers was clean beyond me and *apropos* of nothing.

REVEREND CAMPBELL AND THE MAGPIE

My own thought galloped to it—for his wife taught him that softness, being as devout as an abbess, herself—that for the dominies, as an order or trade among men, he carried more of charity than any whom I knew. More by far than I could boast, or cared to. “Why do you reproach yourself about the preachers?”

“It was this Doctor Ely,” returned the General, “of whom I was thinking. I was remembering certain severities of judgment towards him long ago. I heard him preach, yet could give him no credit for sincerity. He impressed me as one who looked often in the glass and seldom from the window. He was friendly, affable, and, I think, honest; and yet I liked him no more than I like that reverend cringer who was just now here. I well recall saying to this Doctor Ely—probably I had him in my mind’s eye at the time, and it hurt him, too—that he who was professionally good would never be very good, nor he who was excellent for a salary offer an example of the best excellence. It may be that my natural distrust of preachers is, after all, nothing save my natural fear of them. You have not forgotten how I told you I feared men of peace. That is true; I fear folk who profess peace as a principle—your Quaker and your preacher—as I fear and

fall back before the inhuman, or as children fear a ghost. It is all to be accounted for perhaps, in the differing natures of folk. One man has a genius for peaceful while another's bent is for war, and each will misunderstand the other's motives. There can be little in common and less of trust between them, since they will live as far apart as black and white. It is, I say, quite natural—war and peace—wolf and sheep. I've no doubt, now," concluded the General, a smile beginning to show, "that to your wolf on the hill, your grazing sheep down in the valley is a mighty suspicious character."

CHAPTER VI

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

Those next few weeks went by in a tumbling procession that was more like mob violence than aught orderly or sequential. The town was overrun of folk. It was a climbing case of everybody under foot—everybody stepped on one, and, in compensation, one stepped on everybody.

Jim was driven to remark concerning the collecting tangle of humanity, and the crush and crowd and jostle of it. The sage Jim was speaking to his own defence, being indicted for some neglect of me.

“Pears like, Marse Major,” said Jim, soothingly, “you-all must jes’ wrastle along somehow until dish yere pop’lace begins to abrogate. I’m doin’ d’ bes’ I knows how; but she shorely is a time for every ’possum to learn to hang by his own tail.”

“What do you mean by ‘abrogate?’” I was willing to be amused at the expense of the erroneous Jim.

“You don’t tell me, Marse Major, that you-all don’t know what ‘abrogate’ means?”

Jim imitated astonishment. "Why, a thing abrogates when it beds itse'f down—kind o' quiles itse'f up like a moccasin snake."

It was impressive, the throng in the streets—a multitude hungry for office—a multitude it would ask a miracle to feed and fill. The whole country was come to town, the place blazed with Jackson badges, every face shone with victory. It was a pretorian band, and had borne its beloved captain into power on its shields. It was present now for jubilation and for spoil.

For myself, I surveyed the surging, shouting, unkempt thousands with disfavor; the General liked and applauded them.

"They are as rightfully here," said he, "as the smuggest, slyest rascal of riches of them all. We are done with Adams and his Federal dogma, 'The best dressed citizen is the best citizen.' The day is the day of democracy."

"And very well," said I; "democracy is my creed, too. But may it not scrape its face with a razor? Would soap destroy it? I grow sick of a democracy which finds no outlet for expression save cowhide boots all mud, and standing on a damask chair in them." The General snorted; next to his dead Saint Rachel, he loved the herd.

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

Noah, who was much in my company these days, gave one of his cynic shrugs.

"Major, doubtless you are a democrat," observed Noah with a comic face. "But you have been too much solitary, and you've forgotten the tenets of our faith. You should recall yourself to that inscription on the cornerstone of our temple: 'The Mob giveth, the Mob taketh away, blessed be the name of the Mob.'"

The weather was fine, and clear as a bell in the sky; but the frost coming up from the ground made underfoot another sonnet altogether. With bright air, and sun shining, still the roads weltered mere swamps, and all so set and puddled of soft ooze they would have bogged a saddle blanket. Carriages were out of the possible; but, save for crowds on the sidewalks, folk a-foot did well enough.

The pretty Peg was each day to the Indian Queen to chat with us. I saw so much of her, she grew on me like a habit.

Eaton for the war desk was known now to all, and, verbally at least, acquiesced in. Noah's slicing work with his Spanish sword had been whispered industriously; scores went up to gaze on the broad blotches of dull red where the rogue Catron's blood had spread like paint; the arm wide open from wrist to shoul-

der-joint—a very gutter of a wound!—was dilated upon; and the result appeared in a wholesome caution on the conversational parts of our enemies. Noah was still in town; and no male at least came reckless enough to court the fate of Catron. Besides, the buzz and talk of a new administration scraping its feet at the door and lifting the latch of events would occupy the public mouth, and mention of Peg, whether for good or bad, was crowded out of it. The future would have been the better for peace had these conditions secured a longer maintenance.

Among others, that Reverend Doctor Ely, for whom the equally Reverend Campbell and the magpie one aforetime came upon the carpet, broke rapturously into town. I say “broke,” since as a term it may best depict the effusiveness of that descent upon the General. Twenty years before, this Ely had met the General; their acquaintance had been as attenuated as it might be and still bear up the name; and with that slender capital the hopeful Doctor was present to make the most it.

Surely, I met the reverend man. He was a bald, brisk, worldly personage, with a most noble appetite for the flesh-pots. He carefully sustained himself the hypocrite in that last behalf, however, and to folk casual he offered

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

nothing beyond an appearance fervently religious. While with us, he held forth in sundry local pulpits, and although I heard him not myself, he was warmly eulogized by pious critics who knew what sermons should be.

The worthy Doctor with a view to Florida dangled about the General. The Reverend Campbell, and the magpie one, dangled about the worthy Doctor. They were made to see, with the very finish of it, however, that by no accident of concession would the General place their man, Westfall, in the van of Florida affairs to set up mimic thrones in the Governor's Palace of St. Augustine.

The news was a blow to them; and the urgent trio were no Stoics to be capable of excluding from their brows the chagrin they felt. They no longer harrassed the General, however, which, when now a score of duties pulled at him like horses, was no small desideratum.

Presumably as a last ditch wherein to perish, the Reverend Doctor Ely came to me. I was no favorite of his, nor he of mine. To me he was not a precious metal. Polished? yes—and yet only to remind one of brass. He was, as I have said, of fashionable model; fond of his burgundy, and his canvas-back; garbed fastidiously and in the mode; precisely that

character the General so accurately read those years before when he suspected him as one less concerned for the fit of his conscience than the fit of his coat.

When the Reverend Doctor encountered me, I cut him short. To do this, let me tell you, I took my courage in my hands, for it is no child's play to thwart a dominie.

"You are one who holds fast for the doctrine of foreordination?" I asked this like a catechist at his questions.

"I am," returned the Reverend Doctor.

"And you believe that many are called while few are chosen?"

"I do."

"And in original sin; and infant damnation; and how hell is paved with children's skulls?"

"I do. To what, however, does this move?"

"And the love of gold to be the root of evil?" I went on, disregarding the question thrust at me; "and that it would be easier to pass a camel through the needle's eye than a rich man into heaven?"

"Sir, I insist on hearing the purpose of your surprising curiosity."

"Why, then, it should all be huddled into this. Your Westfall, rich and sinful, by what

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

you say may be presumed to dwell in multiplied peril of immortal shipwreck. And since such be your craft, and the trade you pick up bread by, would it not come more seemly for yourself, and be for this Westfall an effort more of grace, were you, instead of storming the General with pleas for a Governorship which might prove but a worm to gnaw him, to employ yourself in bringing about the eternal safe advantage of his soul?"

The Reverend Doctor withdrew, his dander much on furious end, and shortly thereafter the tail of my eye caught a picture of him, as—heads close together—he conferred whisperingly with the Reverend Campbell in a corner of the longroom of the Indian Queen.

Since I could not think well, I was careful to think nothing at all of these reverend office seekers. In that latter I dropped into error; they were worthy serious respect. I should have borne it more upon my memory how easy comes destruction, and that he who is incapable of building one brick upon another may yet tear down the most stubborn best masonry of man. I should have kept before me those powers for ill which arm the meanest, and not have forgotten how the veriest vermin of a rat might gnaw the canvas of a Rubens.

Remembering those ignoble ones that even-

ing, I foolishly burst into disparagement of the clergy as a class. The General was smart for defence.

"Humbug!" quoth the General. "Because you have seen the inside of two, you would have it you know them all. It were as wise if you declared Washington to be a traitor for that Arnold would have sold West Point. Every tub, even a pulpit tub, must stand upon its own bottom."

I have told how dumb and dead lay vilification on the masculine lip, and that no man so much as breathed against the fame of Peg. There was notice on its way to show the women were unquelled.

It was the day before the General's inauguration, and he over ears with his address, reading and re-reading it, so as to give the periods a best volume and voice, and endow them with that strutting majesty of utterance his vanity conceived belonged in justice to their merit. He would be by himself while thus rehearsing, for he took shame to vapor up and down, and toss about before me, and swore that my presence, glowering from a chair, would have daunted Cicero. I was glad enough to leave him to himself, it being but poor sport to play at audience for a bad orator; moreover, since the speech was written

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

in my Nashville home and wrangled over, as it proceeded, by the General and myself like dogs over a bone, it would come to me as nothing new. And so the General was left to plod about in his paragraphs much like a cow in a morass, difficult and slow, and sinking to the hocks with every step. I could catch the humming roar of him in my parlor, while he swaggered about his rooms, singing out shrill and high in declamation, and reveling in the figure he would cut.

While I was idly turning this weakness of the General to think himself a Patrick Henry, when he had no more of eloquence or music than any midnight owl, a nervous tap came on my panels. I was instantly on my feet; the tap quite drove the General and his rhetoric out of my head. By some instinct, or, mayhap, the tap itself was marked of agitation, I not only recognized it for Peg, but knew she was in grief. I threw open the door.

Peg stepped in; she was white to the lips; and this paleness of ivory showed the more on her because of the great dark eyes and those midnight shadows to dwell within her hair. Save for this pallor, however, she seemed steady as a rock.

It was on the outside, though, for no sooner was I seated again than she drifted

down before my feet on the floor, and, with her head on my knee, broke into a passion of sobbing. I let my hand, for sympathy, rest a moment on her poor head, and when I thought she would have cried enough, lifted her up and placed her in a chair.

"What is it?" I said. "I thought I was to see no more tears from you." This I threw off in half sprightly tones to rally Peg.

"Nor shall you," cried she, "but I was fair spent and beaten for want of a good cry. And you should know"—she was giving me a trace of brightness now—"that crying is so much like conversation, to cry alone is like talking to one's self. I can not go to my husband; and the General, good and kind, is with it all too old and too great, and, therefore, too much out of my reach. I've just you; and that's how rich I am for confidants. I've not a woman to be friend to me in all the world; nor would I trust her if I had. I've just you; and so you are like to see a deal of worry."

"All that is mighty sweet," I returned, "and every word a flower. And yet, what is the wrong?"

"And simply nothing, after all," she replied. "Only it's so much more horrible to see it with your eyes than hear it with your ears." Peg put a note into my hands. "It

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

came through the post; and doubtless means no more than the malevolence which was author to it."

The note had no name; nothing to indicate its parentage. It read:

"Revenge is sweet! I have you in my power; and I shall burn you as savages burn their victim at the stake. I pray that you live long to extend my pleasure. Think not that you can escape me. I would not that death nor any evil thing should take you out of my hand for half the world."

"The nameless devil!" I cried. "It is a woman's hand of writ, though the letters are made purposely big and sprawling. Have you any thought at who she should be?"

"No," returned Peg; "I can not so much as guess."

Peg and I talked the question up and down, I asking and she answering, and with the end we were where we started, that was nowhere at all. The Reverend Campbell came into my conjecturings, he and his magpie mate; but I did not mention them, for what would have been the use of feathering Peg's imagination with a surmise?

"But, in good truth, I came to you," said Peg at the end, "not for any hope of solving this. That would be frankly impossible. Rather I am here to get a drink of your courage; for,

faith! though I wear as brave a face as I may, my own betimes runs something low. And now,"—Peg stood up and gave me her dainty hand, mimicking the manner of a man—"and now, my big comrade, having had my cry, and got my draught of courage, I shall go back to the President's Square; and there I shall forget the whole story of this miserable letter. That is"—she had gone into the hall and was closing the door now, with only a strip of her sweet face looking in to me—"forget all except how I cried at your knee and was very, very happy because you were good and kind and—let me cry."

When the door was shut, I picked up the note which Peg had left and placed it in the private locker of my desk. Then I sate me down and thought revengefully on Peg's wrongs, and the hatefulness of him who should think her harm. But her dark, deep eyes were forever coming in to look on me, and at the last I had a memory for nothing but her beauty; and, elaborating thereon, I considered how beauty was in itself a benediction implied of Providence, and a sermon; and then I got to reading Burns; and I confess—however often I had spoken of them as so much sweetened oatmeal—there arose in me a delight from those verses as though they were the songs of

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

birds. And throughout the whole, from Peg's crying at my feet until I'd put Burns away in his place, the drone of the General, thundering on tariff, and finance, and standing armies, and sinking funds, was in the air ; and all futile, so I thought, and dreary and workaday and commonplace.

Somehow, for all of Burns and my meditations, after Peg had left me, my heart felt poor and robbed. Also, I turned less and less patient with the General, humming at his coming speech like a great bee in a bottle. At last I went in to him and gave him my tart opinion of his doings, for all the world like an actor with a part to study, or some girl primping and preparing for conquest before a glass.

"Have you so forgotten English," I cried, "that you can not tell your views to the people without first telling and re-telling them a score of times to yourself?"

But the General was in a high mood and no more to be dealt with than a tempest.

"Take your irritation out for a walk, sir," said he. "Take a walk for your nerves. Something has combed your fur wrong-wise; and I don't think it could have been politics. You prodigiously remind me of one in love, and who has ear-patience for naught save the voice of his mistress."

Out to walk I went ; I did not think the General worth a retort. You are not, however, to follow his hint, and lose and leave the plain footprints of the fact. I was no more in love with Peg than was he ; I examined myself on that head and made myself particularly clear. Like all men who are physically big and strong, and, moreover, like all men border-born and taught that duty from the ground up of protecting ones weaker than themselves, particularly women-folk and babes, I went as naturally to Peg's side in her troubles as ever went deer to drink. It was in my nature and my lesson to do this. Sympathy is a plant to grow most quickly on roughest soil ; and folk of my shag-bark sort are ever soonest on the ground, and stay the longest, when the cause is the weeping cause of woman.

And there you have the explanation of my interest for Peg. The General, himself, was just as headlong ; his sympathies fair went about on tiptoe in a constant search for weak ones in distress. Not humanity alone, but animals ; and I've seen him go forth into midnight sleet and ice—and Death tearing at his lungs with a cough—to bring in a bleating lamb. It was, then, but partisan sympathy, and not love in the bud, which I felt for Peg ; and I turned much fortified and quieter in my own thoughts,

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

when, following a rigid search of my breast, I made it out.

Noah, whom I ran across in the corridor, went with me for the walk. We broke away northward across the city to be free of the crowds which came and went about Gadsby's and the Indian Queen. When we were more alone and with the roads to ourselves, I told Noah of the nameless letter to Peg.

"And that is a fine feather in the cap of Henry Clay," I cried; "this employment of nameless villains to write threats to a girl!"

"Now let me set you straight," said Noah. "I've gone to the ends of this foul work. It is not the Clay so much as the Calhoun interest which furnishes the venom. The General is turned round; he believes it to be Clay. I assure you, the enemy is a Calhoun coterie from South Carolina."

"But what is their purpose?" I asked. "Calhoun is Vice-President; he will preside over the Senate and be part of the administration. Why should he seek to mar it?"

"Mark you, I do not say," replied Noah, "that Calhoun, personally, so much as hears of these wrongs done in his name. Your friends will sometimes go farther in your cause than you will go for yourself. Let me briefly tell you what I know. Calhoun would succeed the

General for the Presidency. He spins a web as fine as any spun of spiders. So curiously has he brought his forces to bear, that of the six he will own three of the General's cabinet—Berrien, Branch, and Ingham. He wanted the war office, and was craftily urging Hayne, of his own state, when the General unconsciously brushed his plan aside with Eaton. Now the Calhoun thought is to drive Eaton from the place; and to mock at Mrs. Eaton and stain her with slanders is the Palmetto idea of a method. The more cruel it is, the more likely to succeed; and the latter condones the ignobility. These folk play for a White House; and the greater the stake the less of scruple on the part of the players. Remember, too, these children of evil have just begun; the attacks, as they proceed, will mobilize a force. The women will be brought to their aid. We gagged the men's mouths with a duel; but who is to gag the women's, and how will he go upon the work?"

This news about Calhoun was nothing by way of surprise. I knew him to be as ambitious as Lucifer; more, I was aware of him for no friend of the General; I had learned that much two years before.

While it was within my knowledge, this enmity, I had not set it forth to the General; the truth of it would have done him no good,

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

and gotten in the way. It would have served only to fire his wrath, and he was one most unmanageable when angry.

Wherefore throughout the campaign, while the General and Calhoun were running mates, I said no word of the latter's secret feeling of envious jealousy and hate, and the General went to the election in the dark, believing the Vice-President to be among his staunchest friends. Thinking now of Peg, I began to glimpse a day when the Calhoun rancors would be worth the General's knowledge.

"Assuming that Calhoun languishes to be President," said I, "and intrigues for that object, what do you say to the radical sort of his States Rights position—going in for the right to nullify a general law, and secede at will from the national circle, and all that? Would you call Calhoun either politic or right to occupy those positions?"

"And now for the 'politic and right,'" responded Noah, "Calhoun must go with the current. A statesman is a scientist of circumstances; he must not fight wind and tide, but use them. In South Carolina, Nullification and Secession are doctrines of a first respectability. One meets folk daily who would sooner be respectable than right; and Calhoun may well

be one of these. No," observed Noah in conclusion, speaking with emphasis, "Calhoun must adopt his state, or his state will not adopt him. He can not build himself for anything without his state; that is the keystone, wanting which his arch of the future comes tumbling to the ground."

"Then you regard Calhoun as helpless, and that he could not, if he would, rescue himself on a question of Nullification or Secession?"

"No; he's as helpless as a fly in amber; he must go with his state or be lost."

"Do these proposals of a right to nullify, and a right to secede, then, strike so deep with their roots? I had not thought men cared so much for tariff."

"Sir," replied Noah, "while present States Rights discussion circles about tariff as argument most convenient, behind it, and as the grand motive, lurks black slavery. A protest against tariff links many rich merchants, not alone in Charleston, but in every great seaboard city from Baltimore to Boston, to this doctrine. They would bring in goods free. There be many among these, tugged upon by their pockets, who can be brought to States Rights for a tariff argument, and who would turn off in horror were the true black slavery

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

reason advanced. There you have the cunning of Calhoun."

"Then you hold slavery to be the main-spring of States Rights as a movement?"

"Absolutely," and Noah's tones left no doubt of his conviction. "Slavery overshadows all. It is a question to yet shake the country in its soul."

There was silence between us ; we walked on, I, for my side, ruminating the words of Noah. The more I considered them, the more they looked the truth. Calhoun's enmity I made no mouth about believing ; indeed, as I've set forth, it already had dwelt in my knowledge for long.

Getting back to what was presently being acted, I spoke of that cabinet trio whom my companion had marked as of the clan and same family of politics with Calhoun.

"Branch, Berrien, and Ingham," repeated Noah, "are blood and bone with Calhoun. If they drive out Eaton, there may come a fourth to strengthen them. Four of a cabinet six! That would make a mighty beginning in any hunting of the White House."

"And what," said I, remembering Peg, and my rage swelling, "what are we to think of ones who would hunt a White House across the naked honor of a woman?"

"What we are to think," said Noah, with a toss of the hand, "will be the least of their worry when once they succeed."

"And that will never happen," I returned. "I hold it between my palms to defeat their best laid plan—their most darling chicane, as you shall witness."

"And so I hope," said he. "Also, now you know as much as I, it is left with you to warn the General and make bare to him Calhoun. You are the right one to speak with him on that skittish topic."

Inauguration as a ceremony came and departed, and I looked on the going thereof as its most superlative feature. There were twenty thousand people to hear the General's address; and when he advanced to the platform reared for him on the eastern front of the Capitol, the multitude doffed hats and stood a most remarkable spectacle, the like of which I'd never gazed on.

But the later horde in the White House defies expression! It was simple loot and pilage, wanting bloodshed, and nothing carried away. The cowhide throng, mud and mire to the boot-ears, climbed on sofas and stood on chairs; they would catch a glimpse of their god at whatever damask cost. When punch would have been brought for their entertainment, they

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

rushed upon the servants like red barbarians, struggling, wrestling, the pails spilled out upon the floors. It was I who settled the disorder, and I claim credit as for a stratagem which on other fields might have saved a battle. I caused the drinkables to be quietly withdrawn to the lawn, beyond the first hill and far to the south. Then from a corner of the East Room I announced the fact with a loud voice.

It was as though my words bore a charm; in a twinkling the White House proper approached desertion. Folk decent and civilized might again move about, and quiet ones have peace. The mob never came back, for I made it my duty that no lack of punch should occur on the lawn; there the uproarious remained and drank, and at last—those who could walk—they drifted away, each deviously to his habitat, and something akin to quiet settled again about the eaves and rafters of the mansion.

The General put in most of the next day on a lounge, in nurse to Augustus, recovering from the ordeal. It all but swept his life away as in a freshet. However, he pulled through; and when in the evening I went to ask about his condition, I found him with that little miniature of his wife I've spoken of, and her hymn-book, wherewith he made his daily church and said his prayers. What a soul would have been

his for cross-handles and chain-mail!—what a knight! so dauntless among men, and withal so loyal with all his love to the dear lady of his heart. She might die to others, but she would never die to him. His love would each night search her out among the stars.

And now we settled down to our strange life. But since I use the word, let me tell you in how short a period the strange becomes the common; for I had not been a week in the White House, and in and out of its great rooms, when all was as familiar and friendly to me as though I had passed my days from boyhood within the four walls of it.

The General's family, beyond himself and me, was made up of his nephew Donalson, the latter's wife, and the portrait-maker, Earl; not an extensive circle, truly, and one to be soon contracted by the desertion of two, as you shall presently hear.

We were still in process of that mild wrangle with our new abode which must ever precede a last adjustment, when, like a clap of thunder from a sky without a cloud, the General's niece—she who was our Lady of the White House—came upon him. There lowered something formidable and gloomy in the mien of the young woman as she entered the room, and because no towering force of character had

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

distinguished her theretofore, this cloudy something was the more to be observed. I should have said, too, the social lines were already being set for and against our pretty Peg, and this visit of the General's niece was somewhat in the nature of a blow from the enemy's side.

"What is it, my dear?" asked the General, glancing up from his conversation with me.

"Uncle," she said, much in the manner of a starling which whistles a tune that has been taught it, "Uncle, I am here to tell you that I can not call upon Mrs. Eaton. I will receive her, since this is your house, and you its master. But call on her in return, I can not."

"Hoity toity!" quoth the General, "and now where did you learn these bad manners?"

"It is my duty to myself, Uncle; there is not a lady in Washington, beginning with Mrs. Calhoun and going down to the least among us, who will call on Mrs. Eaton; therefore, I can not call on her."

"Then you might better go back to Tennessee, my dear," said the General.

And the niece and her husband went.

The word "Calhoun," had not, however, escaped the General. It was forever cropping up in manner and form most sinister, that word Calhoun; and in the entire crusade of

venom waged upon our Peg, it seemed on the lips of everyone with whom the exigencies of the hour threw us into speech, from the immortal Pigeon-breast to the General's very niece.

"The Calhoun interest," remarked the General, when his young relative had retired in wrath to pack her trunks, "would appear to be headquarters for the foe."

The General said "foe" and meant it; for he was one whose eyes were in his heart and saw ever his enemy in the enemy of his friend.

It was then I took occasion to lay out to the General in particular, not alone the plan of Calhoun to seize a presidency; not alone his leadership in that war of politics then mustering forces over Nullification and a state's right to secede, and which in the next Congress gave birth to the debates between Webster and Hayne; but I went a step beyond, and exhibited the hidden enmity of Calhoun which was leveled at himself, and had hunted his destruction as far away as the Seminole campaign, when Calhoun was in Monroe's cabinet as Secretary of War.

"It is true," I declared; "at that time your only friend was Monroe. Calhoun in the secret councils of the cabinet was warm to break your sword."

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

"How do you know that?" demanded the General, his eye making for heat.

"I read it in a letter from Governor Forsythe to Colonel Hamilton. If that be not enough, I heard it from ex-President Monroe himself, when last evening he was with us here to dinner. Moreover, I was made aware of it two years ago on my trip to the Mississippi."

"And why did I not hear of it before?"

"You have learned it in ample time for every interest you carry, whether of your own or Peg's."

"That is true," said the General, "that is quite true." Then he mused with bended brow. At last he burst forth: "I begin to see into the Calhoun thoughts. He knows my rule, which we agreed on before we left Nashville, that no member of my cabinet shall succeed me. That leaves him but two rivals, Clay and Adams, for Crawford can never run again. He has three adherents in my cabinet through whose aid he hopes to feather the nest of his ambitions with patronage. He would destroy Eaton with the thought of gaining a fourth. Meanwhile he will preside over the Senate, and control legislation in favor of low tariff, if not a flat level of free trade. Thus he trusts to break down Clay and Adams, who are wedded

to protection. Verily, a most noble, a most delicate bit of chicane!" Here the General brooded for a long space. "I might admire it," he went on, "nay, I might even aid it on its high-stepping way, were it not that he includes in his intrigue the destruction of a girl. It is like a play, Major, and we must foil the villain and save our beautiful Peg. Her name shall not be blown upon, though all the presidencies for ten centuries to come depend upon it! Peg came spotless among us; and from among us, spotless she shall depart; and that in the teeth of all the Calhouns that ever came out of Carolina."

The General smashed his clay pipe at this crisis, and by that token I knew the thing to be already done. It was a way he had, this pipe-breaking, of signing his bonds.

Peg lived catty-cornered across the President's Square, and ran in and out of the White House like one of the inmates. She liked the flowers, and she liked the pictures, and was never tired of gazing at the latter and smelling to the former. She was so much sunshine about the mansion, not the lightest nor yet the least gloomy house in nature, but quite the contrary.

One day a little scene occurred about which nothing of import clambered, and yet I

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

would give it here; for it pleases me when now I'm fallen in the vale of years, and the General and Peg and those others who were my friends are dead and gone from out my hands, to remember such frail matters for their sweetness rather than their consequence; and truth to say, they stay by me, too, with gentle clearness when events that were of moment are clean faded from my mind.

Peg, then, was dragging me about by the hand—for she was as much the romp as any child—and we journeyed from room to room, and from picture to picture. We were standing in front of that portrait of Washington which Dolly Madison once slashed from its frame to save from vandal British.

"Come," said Peg, tugging at my wrist with the two hands of her, "I'm weary of these. Doubtless he was a wondrous fine gentleman"—pointing to the painted figure of our first president—"and lived well aware of it, himself, as one may know by the satisfied smirk of him. But show me some other picture, one more beautiful and less grand—and not so satisfied with itself, and respectable. All the folk I hate are respectable, and I begin to loathe the word!"

"I can show you the most beautiful picture

in the world," I retorted; and, whirling her by the shoulders, I stood her before a mirror.

Peg looked upon her kindly reflection for long in silence; then her eyes filled up.

"It isn't your compliments I cry for," said Peg, breaking into a catchy laugh; "but your tone is so queer with the sheer kindness of it, that I am taken by the heart. You dear, true friend; you at least think good of little Peg!" And with that, she came quite close, and turned her face in wistful yet trusting fashion up to mine.

An hour later—and it was growth of this—I did a foolish action; and yet no harm turned of it, but only a better friendship between myself and the coxcomb Pigeon-breast. It fell forth when Peg was gone home, and I alone near the north door of the big East Room, and none save myself in the broad expanse of that mighty apartment. My soul was somewhat in arms over Peg, for the wintry moan in her tones when she spoke of my faith in her goodness was still working on me, and I would have bartered ten years of my life to have had set before me some specific male of my species who should avow himself Peg's evil-thinker. My vengeance was starving and wolfish, and I would have fed it with him.

While in this vein of fret and tumult, I

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

caught the voice of Jim in the hallway outside the door.

"Do I know d'Marse Major?" I heard Jim say, apparently in answer to the question; "does Jim know d'Marse Major? Well, Jim should say likely; for, you hyar me! Jim's been all through him with a lantern. You-all may tell them gambler-gentlemen somethin' new about a ace of clubs; an' mebbby you could post Jim of somethin' he aint heerd about corn whiskey; but I don't allow thar's anythin' mo' for Jim to learn about d'Marse Major. 'Cause why; 'cause he's Jim's Marse Major, an' I jes' nacherally raise him, I does, from a colt."

When I stepped into the vestibule to answer to my own name, and put a stop to the extravagances of Jim, I saw, to my astonishment, that the caller was no less a personage than Pigeon-breast. Without pausing to hear his mission, I took him by the arm and led him out upon the lawn.

Once there, however, I was sore put to it to show reason for my conduct, of the rather extraordinary character of which one caught some glint in the expression of amazement that made wide the eyes of Pigeon-breast and all but set his mouth ajar.

Now the truth was, that anonymous letter

to Peg, and which lay safe locked in my desk, had ever stuck in my craw. I said it was a woman's hand of writing, but I was by no means sure. Knowing hardly a baker's dozen of folk in town, there were not many for my thoughts to run upon in this scurvy business; and I had had it now and then on my mind—the more since Pigeon-breast had broken into the trouble at an early hour as the open ill-wisher of Peg—to call this fine gentleman's attention to the missive with a view to asking him was he its architect. In my present frame of hunger to lay hands on a flesh and blood enemy of Peg's—one of my own rude sex—and I suppose because Pigeon-breast was a foppish creature of scents and ribbons who might lean to feminine methods of attack, I put the question to him. Fairly, I blurted it out, and I fear with nothing of fineness or diplomacy.

“Me?” cried the outraged Pigeon-breast in a shrill treble through a sense of injustice; “me?” he cried again, starting back a pace, perhaps from savageries which looked out upon him from my eye, “never! On my soul! to think of such a thing! Me write an anonymous letter! Why, sir,” and poor Pigeon-breast chirped forth the words like a mouse that has been wronged, “why, sir, should a

THE STORM GATHERS AGAINST PEG

man say so, I'd have him to the field, sir, and cut his throat."

There was no doubt of it; the insulted Pigeon-breast was not the author of that letter. No man might simulate his indignant excitement. I made amends handsomely, and for the first time Pigeon-breast and I shook hands. There was no harm in the creature save that he was a bandbox fool.

It ran well towards evening when I went about in the conservatory culling a basket of flowers for Peg. This I was wont to do each day, since the blossoms went otherwise to waste; for the place was a mere lair and nest of masculinity, with the General's niece gone home, and none about save the General and myself—and I might add Earl, but he had no wit save for canvas and colors, and no thought except from morning till night to paint the General's portrait. The General and I were no mighty consumers of nosegays; wherefore, as I've said, and to save the flowers from loss, I was used each day to cut an armful of the best and bravest and send them across to Peg's, where they would give her smile for smile and dare their beauties against her own from every corner.

While I was roving right and left among the blossoms, the General came in with long

strides. There was a kind of angry hurry to him, and he carried a letter in his hand.

"Here is something to make you curse your kind," cried he. Then, seeing my flowers: "How now! how now! and when was Mars a gardener and has the world turned girl! These should be thin days and bloodless, when the starkest saber that ever rode on my bridle hand—he whom the Creeks called the 'Big Death'—loiters with woman's wares and learns to twine a posy."

"They are for Peg," said I, more nettled than I showed, for it struck me he talked a deal about nothing at all.

"Oh, they are for Peg," he repeated, his glance whimsical, yet narrow and intent; "they are for Peg!" Then just as I was warming to the brink of knowing what he would mean by that, he harked back suddenly to the letter in his clutch. "Come with me. Here is a word from that very Reverend Doctor Ely about your Peg, and we must concert steps to prove him the false defamer that he is."

CHAPTER VII

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM.

And now there comes beneath my hand the hard portion of this history, the part which I most mislike and bear with least of patience. It is the record written by the smug, false Doctor Ely to the General, wherein with a particular past bearing, he piled up his scarlet charges. There came a dozen counts, and as if it were an indictment; and in them no slackness, but, instead, an evil confidence of statement plain and clear, as one after another he cast those stones at Peg. Nor shall his communication be set forth; I would not so offend against the whiteness of Peg's name, nor yet harass my own soul's roots by giving a line of it to types and presses. The more, since it was all a web of lies which sly rogues wove for the shallow hand of this Ely; and not enough of truth in it from top to bottom as should serve to make it respectable falsehood. Sufficient that there were stories with Washington and again New York as the theatres, and on these was based a brazen demand that Eaton

be dismissed the cabinet and Peg whipped from among women wherever virtue had a name.

As the General read these things aloud I sat biting my nail in the flaming impatience of my rage.

"And now what think you?" said he, when he was done.

"I think," cried I, "that I shall ride at once for the caitiff ears of him."

The General, seeing my anger, turned to be mighty calm. It was a manner of ours that when I was for a rage he would go the other way; I, on my side and by way of requital, showed never so busy about methods for peace as when the General was for sounding Boots and Saddles. So, beholding me eating my fingers in a sort of blood-eagerness to come at the throat of that Ely, the General would be for craft; and to demand proof; and to go upon a litigation of the business among ourselves.

"And now you know," said the General, with a bitterness in his mouth like aloes, "why I fear preachers and your peace folk. Here is a false tissue against a girl as white as an angel,"

"My soul for that!" I interjected.

"No one not of the cloth, and saved from men's vengeance by his coat and ruffle, would

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

so dare. But now this Ely throws these lies in our laps, and we must sit tied."

"Yes," I cried, "I see your meaning right well, and I would give my left hand at the wrist joint could any gate be opened through which in honor I might win to the miscreant's heart."

Now the General read the letter to himself; now he knitted his forehead into a snarl and brooded while over against him I sat fury-stung.

"Two matters we are to agree on," said the General at last. "We are not to tell Peg."

"No," said I.

"Nor Eaton."

Now, somehow, I in no fashion, not even the most shadowy, had had Eaton on my slope of thought. It had seemed, in the confusion of wrath into which this charge laid on poor Peg had stirred me, as though there were just three folk in interest for our own side, being the General and Peg and myself. The mention of Eaton struck on me in a strange, blistering way, and was as much an iron in my soul as the slanders of that infamous Ely himself. This came to be no more than a blur of my wits, however; it departed in a blink, and then a feeling somewhat of pleasure succeeded to think Eaton would not be engaged in Peg's defence.

"Peg shall not know," repeated the General, as he who goes over a manœuvre in his mind, "Eaton shall not know. You and I will be enough; and Noah; and mayhap Henry Lee, since I think, Major, you are not the man to be trusted with a reply. You—like myself—would overflow too much, since you own a feeling too deep."

There was sense in what the General advanced; I was in an ill frame for cunning, and to be cool of quill with any specious or refutatory letter-writing. I could have indited nothing that would not run into a challenge with the first line; and, with the pulpit character of the foe to be our answer, that would have been as so much raving madness.

"Let us" said the General, again taking up the scrawl, "examine this precious scorpion's nest in detail, and then we may know best how it should be torn to pieces. This Ely does not make these charges by his own knowledge, but declares how he believes in their truth on the word of some 'extremely honest individual' of this town. This person would be so much the viper he must needs hide and crawl under cover; for this Ely also says 'who asks his name withheld.'"

By this time I had myself in recovery and began to take a part in the thinking.

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

"First, then," said I, "is there any accusation carried which you, yourself, should contradict?"

"There are two," returned the General. "This Ely has it that my dear wife knew Peg's bad conduct and condemned her for it. That is false; my wife spoke of Peg within a six-month; she loved her like her own child; and, I well recall, she kissed Peg when last we left this place. Then, too, Ely asserts how Timberlake was jealous of Eaton before he sailed for the Mediterranean, hated him as Peg's tempter, and would have slain him. That, also, I should know to be a lie; for here," and the General crossed to a shelf and took down a rich Turkish tobacco pouch, "is a tobacco pocket which Timberlake sent to Eaton with a letter asking him to give it me when I arrived; and the letter bore date not ten days before Timberlake died. There remain but two great delinquencies alleged; the one here and the other in New York; and both are capable of proof for either their truth or falsity."

"And how shall we go about that proof?" I asked.

"As a primary step, then, let us have Noah with us."

Noah came, and the General put the Ely letter into his dark, nervous hands.

"The gentleman seems marvelously prompt," said Noah, "to decide a woman's fame away on barest hearsay. Doubtless he is a good Christian, but he would make a bad judge."

"This is what you will do, Noah, if you love me," said the General: "Go to Philadelphia. Squeeze from this Ely the name of that reptile on whose word he starts about this crime against innocence. Then press to New York for the evidence needed to display the falsehood he tells concerning Peg in that place."

When Noah had gone forth, the General called in Henry Lee, who was a secret, trustworthy man, and, dictating while Lee did the pen work, proceeded to beat the Reverend Ely and his lies as folk beat carpets. The General, when it was done, dismissing Lee, read to me his answer; and I could not so much as add one word. It was as complete a retort, and withal as slashing an arraignment of this Ely for his own cruel part, as might be compassed with paper and ink. I listened; and I never loved the General half so well before.

"And yet," observed the General, when he had closed the reading and the letter lay ready for the post, "this Ely is but the mask for some rogue who hides behind him."

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

There was no more to do now, save wait for Noah's return. I had one ordeal of the spirit, however; that was when Peg came next day. I so yearned over her in pity, it marked itself in my face and she took some dim account of it. She went away wrong in her hunting for a cause, however.

"What has been the mischance?" said Peg, getting up and standing behind my chair with a soft hand on each of my shoulders. "You've had poor news from your farms?"

"A horse dead," I replied. This was so far true as a word that the letter telling me thereof had but just arrived, and lay open on my table. "Only that a favorite horse has died," I replied. "But he was one of the General's Truxton colts, and I but loth to lose him."

It was a soon day thereafter, and we yet waiting for word of Noah, when the General re-opened the affair of the Ely letter.

"The man Ely," said he, thoughtfully, "has been practiced upon. The Calhoun interest it was which stirred him to this. He would be clay easily moulded for such a purpose, and peculiarly when the potters employed upon him might promise somewhat for his ambition. As against Eaton and Peg, the fellow would needs lack personal motive, since he

knows them not at all. He might find in his bosom, truly, a part willingness to disturb me, because I broke the heart of his hope for a Florida exaltation. Yet even with that to train his malignancy upon the Eatons, it is clear he must be loaded, primed, and aimed by other hands. Thus do I make the story of it: if Clay be out, as you declare, who is there save Calhoun to put this Ely forward? Then, too, there is the coincidence of method. Ely does there what the Calhoun folk do here."

"Still," I returned, for I believed in justice though to an enemy, and would not condemn the Vice-President without some open sureness of proof; "still, as Noah explained, these villainies might find act and parcel in Calhoun's interests, and that gentleman be as innocent of personal part as next year's babes."

"Be that as it may," retorted the General, "a man is responsible for his dogs. Besides, it is too much to believe that Calhoun has no notice of this war on the Eatons."

"Oh, as to that," I replied, "I think there is scant doubt. An important movement in his destinies is not to continue for long in the dark, to a keen sight like Calhoun's. However, he might miss details."

"He knows of these tales against Peg," declared the General firmly, and as though the

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

question were solved and settled. "Also, by lifting his finger he could end them in the mouths that give them words. When one can do a thing and doesn't do it, that is because one doesn't want to do it, but prefers things as they are. And there you have it. In the mean courses against Peg your Vice-President is accessory. By the Eternal!" swore the General abruptly, beginning to walk about the floor, "but such perfidy makes me to loathe the man! I should hate all that comes from him, whether of policy or plan. For where a source is foul, the stream will be unclean."

There was now to enter upon the stage one who wrought strongly for Peg's defence. But he toiled better for himself, for at last he took the White House by it; the General in a gust of kindness for what he did in Peg's pure favor making him his heir of politics and laying the presidency in his hands with the death of his own second term. This personage, to be so much the ally of Peg, and so fortunate for his own future, was none other than that Van Buren who resigned his Governorship and traveled the long way from Albany to become the General's Secretary of State.

Heretofore I've made suggestion that the General's knowledge of Van Buren was

nothing deep, but only narrow and of a surface sort. More; the truth was that now when the General stood in the midst of this Eaton trouble and saw a long strife ahead, he was by no sense secure for the coming attitude of his premier, and went doubt-pricked as to whether or no it would turn to be a friendly one. I could discern some feather of these misgivings when one evening over our pipes we dwelt on Marcy and Van Buren, these two being top-most spirits of our party in their state.

Marcy was a bold man, and strong with a burly force; as frank and without fear too, as a soldier, and less the hypocrite than any of his day. He had yet to say, from his seat in the Senate, "The politicians of my state wear no masks of superior goodness and make no pretences. They are content to preach what they practice. If they be defeated, they expect to step down and out; if they triumph, they look to enjoy the fruits of their victory. They see no harm in the aphorism, 'To the victor belongs the spoil of the enemy.'" Marcy, I say, had not yet uttered these words in the Senate; but they dwelt with him as a sentiment; he had given them expression in Duff Green's paper; and, since the General said nothing in negation, they were held to declare the feelings of the administration.

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

Before this, I have written somewhere, have I not?—for old age can not hold a memory, nor tell a lucid story step by step, but forever must wander to the garrulous this-side-or-that, with topics alien to the task in hand—how I caught some flash of the General's uncertainty of Van Buren and the pose that gentleman would take on? It fell in this kind. I had asked then a question about Van Buren, and how he compared with his fellow captain, Marcy. The General shook uncertain head.

"Van Buren may surprise us," said he, "and show me wrong besides ; but this is what I think. You are to bear in mind, also, that his selection to be at my cabinet right hand was not personal but political. Here is how I hold him." Now the General spoke with a thoughtful, measured flow of speech, as though his eye were turned to introspection, and he read, as one reads a page of print, his estimate of him whom he sought to weigh. "Van Buren is essentially furtive, lurking, cat-like. He delights in moonlight politics and follows the byways. He avoids the eye, is seldom in the show ring, and, in making his excursions, sticks to the lanes and keeps off the highways. Few men see, and fewer know, Van Buren. He is sly rather than bold ; chicanes rather than assails ; and when attacked he does not fight in that

strifish sense of hard knocks. He poisons the springs and streams and standing water; and then he falls back into the hills. Van Buren does with snares what others do by blows; traps while others hunt. And yet, in a feline way, he likes trouble. Set out a bowl of milk and a bowl of blood, and turn your back. If sure of unobservation, he will lap the blood. But if you stare at him, he dissembles with the milk, purring with fervor sedulous. Ever secret, Van Buren knows of no harder fate than mere discovery. His points of power are his egotism, his skill for sly effort, his talent as a trader of politics. Marcy is of another sort. Marcy is vigorous where Van Buren is fine. If a band of music were to go by, Marcy would regard the bass drum as the great instrument. Van Buren would prefer the piccolo. Marcy does his war work with an axe. When any homicide of politics enforces itself upon Van Buren he moves with sack and bowstring. He waits until midnight, and then, with victim gagged and bagged and bound, drowns him in the Bosphorus of party."

Even as the General spoke, Van Buren was trudging up the street; for it would appear that he had come into town the hour before, and now made speed to pay his respects to the General.

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

While Van Buren was in talk with the General, our first greetings being done, I strove to come by some true account of one who was like to make for much weight in the scales. He was round, short, and by no means superb or imposing. Standing between the General and myself, and both of us above six feet, he seemed something stunted. There was a quiet twinkle in his gray, intelligent eye that he drew from his tavern-keeping sire of Kinderhook; the latter being of shrewd Dutch stock, born to count pennies and to save them, and whose profits with his inn found partial coinage in an education above bottles and tap-rooms for his son. There hovered an oily peace about Van Buren; it showed on him like painted color. I was not tremendously impressed of him, I grant you; albeit, before all was done, I came to better learn him. The man, for a best simile, was like so much quicksilver. Bright and of surprising weight, he rolled away from a touch and never failed to fit himself scrupulously and plausibly into every inequality which the surface he rested on presented. He came to be, as you may think, precisely the man for the General; since, while the one was as apt for heat as Sahara, and as much the home of hurricanes, the other under no stress was ever known to give or take offence. He

would be without quills, this Van Buren, and yet no porcupine in his rattling armor went about more perfect to his own defence or so equal for the problem of his own security.

Van Buren made no lengthy stay with us; there was a hand-shake, a talk of a moment, a bow, and he was back to his quarters in the Indian Queen.

"And what do you say of him?" asked the General, when now his new secretary was gone.

"Why, sir," I replied, "I should call your story of the man a good one. But he does not look so strong as you would make him."

"Why, then," returned the General, "neither does any other thing of silk." Then, after a pause: "Just as an insinuation is stronger than a direct charge, so is Van Buren stronger than other men. I warrant you, as we stand here with all our wisdom, he holds our measures more nearly than we hold his."

The General, you are to observe, and whether early or late, never said a word to Van Buren of Peg and the villain forays against her fame; the General was too proud for that. The defence of Peg seemed a thing personal to his heart; with him it owned no place in politics or the business of the state. Therefore, he would ask no man's aid, and folk on

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

that quarrel might be neutral or pick their sides and go what ways they would.

The General, I say, beheld nothing of politics in the question of his defence of Peg; it was wholly the thing personal. He never realized, what is clear to you and me, that everything was the thing personal with him, and politics a thing most personal of all. Even now, since he had found the Palmetto coterie to be among his enemies, and within short weeks of the birth of his first rancor against Calhoun as one who had sought to do him hidden harm while apeing friendship and aiming at his betrayal with a kiss, he had commenced to nourish a steady wrath against that statesman's policies of Secession and States Rights. This latter he was cultivating and feeding in all possible fashion.

One day I came upon him deep within Marshall's definitions of treason as declared in the trial of Aaron Burr.

"There's the law for you," he cried, with a note of exultation in his tone, and thrusting the book at me with one hand while with the other he marked the place; "there's the law of treason so laid down that a wayfaring man though a fool should not err therein. I shall get it pat to my tongue; I may yet teach it to our Secessionists with a gibbet."

I put this down to show the climbing of the General's anger against Calhoun; and how it began to spread and feel about to assail the Vice-President in his acts and plans and sentiments and hopes. It was, as he said aforetime, "We would foil the villain and save our pretty Peg."

You may rest sure I made no argument against his law studies; indeed, I think treason a crime which the White House can not understand too well nor hate too thoroughly, and I never thought so more than in those far days when the General read Marshall and we carried forward our fight for lovely Peg.

While the General spoke no word of the Eatons and their injuries to Van Buren, the latter for a certainty was not long in town before he thereon held converse with himself. I would be made wise of this by his coming to me—it was our second encounter—and, with a manner suave as cream, asking what to my thought would be a time fitting, and to the lady convenient, for him to call upon our Peg.

"For you must know," said he, spreading out his smooth hands and regarding the backs of them, being, I think, a trick of his to cover an inability to look one between the eyes, "for you must know, sir, since my wife died, and with no daughter in my house to teach me,

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

my society learning has gone excessively to seed."

It became my turn to say that society, I was told—for I carried no personal knowledge thereof, having little genius for it—ran now to broken ends and fragments, and would continue so throughout the year. The social season, by word of such experienced parlor scouts as Pigeon-breast, would not begin until New Year's Day.

"However," said I, in finale, "you may take it from me that the Eatons will be blithe to receive you on any evening you should care to call. There need be no formality; you may pull their latch-string at any hour with every assurance of a welcome."

"Can not you take me there this evening?" he asked, with a kind of enthusiasm.

"I am only too pleased to be of service."

The fair truth is I could have hugged the little secretary from gladness for Peg.

That same night, when later I paid my usual visit to the General for a friendly pipe and to finish the day in smoke before we went to bed, I told him of Van Buren's waiting on Peg. The pleasure the news gave him fell across his face like sunlight. But he carried himself in ordinary fashion.

"Why, sir," said he, "I'm glad that he

has been to see the Eatons. Still, no less could have been looked for from a gentleman."

"But he did better," I said. "Never have I heard more delicate compliment than he offered to Peg. He says she shall preside at his house for those functions which belong with his position."

"And that, since he has no wife, will be a vast convenience for him," responded the General; "this pouring of his guests' tea by our beautiful Peg."

The General would accept it as a matter of course, but I tell you the tidings of that tea-pouring warmed the cockles of his heart. For myself, I made no effort to hide my satisfaction.

"Is it not a strange thing," said the General, after a bit, "how one's first impression will go astray? Who could be more true, or more wise, or better bred or founded in whatever makes for the best in a man, than our Van Buren? And yet I thought him sly, and with a hand for selfish design. The man's as simple as a child!"

"He tells me," I remarked, "that your friend Hoyt of this region warned him you did not like him, and how your great favorite was Calhoun."

"Hoyt is a presumptuous fool," returned the General, hotly. "I would not give Van Buren's finger for Calhoun. Why should he be my favorite of mine who foments treason, and threatens to split the nation like a billet of wood!"

Peg was with me betimes next morning to dilate with dancing pulses over Van Buren at her house the night before.

"For can't you see," she cried, her cheeks red with the excitement that crowded in her breast, "what a strategic point, as you sons of war would term it,"—Peg was laughing here—was your little, round, smooth Secretary of State? He carries the grand legation folk in his wake. With them, all ribbons and orders, and the army—for the latter will be bound to follow since we are the war department—our receptions should be a blaze of glory and gold and aid."

Here Peg clapped her hands with the glee of a child. It was an inspiration to see her so gay.

"I am overcome of delight," I said, mocking gravity, "to know that we are like to gain so much of ornamentation." Then, changing my tone: "But of a truth, my little one, I shall forever love our State Secretary for your sweet sake."

"You brought him," cried Peg. "What

a watch-dog you are to me!" This with sudden warmth. "That is the word, a watch-dog—a faithful watch-dog with a great sleepless heart guarding its Peg! And you shall have a collar."

With that, since I was sitting in my chair and so within her reach, the minx crept up and threw her arms about my neck. It was simply play—the exuberance of a born tomboy. And yet I was glad we were alone and no General about, else I would have lived long ere I had heard the last of it. The situation would have fitted like a glove with the General's bent of humor, and I should not have cared for his raillery.

Peg clung to my neck like a rose to an oak while I tried softly to loosen her arms. I could not make head against her for fear of hurting her.

"How do you like your collar, watch-dog?" she cried, with a chuckle. "And now the buckle—how do you like that?" Here she laid her velvet cheek against my face. "So, watch-dog, you would slip your collar?" This, banteringly. "There; you are free." And Peg unlocked her arms and stood back smiling, her small, white leopard teeth just showing, and her eyes like diamonds. Then donning a satiric air: "Sir, you call yourself a gentleman

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

and a politician. You should know, then, there be two honors no man may decline; the one is a presidency and the other is a—lady.”

With this smartness on her lips Peg broke into downright merriment. The little witch was never so charming!

That evening I was sitting alone with the General; each of us silent and within himself, wrapping his own fancies about him like a cloak. I know not on what uplands of conjecture the General's thoughts were grazing; for myself, I was dwelling on Peg, for I could still feel that soft, warm collar of her two arms clasping my neck.

It is trenching on the wondrous, too, how the sweet image of a woman will train one's soul for war. No sooner would I take Peg upon the back of my meditations, than they straightway went plunging off to her enemies, and to tire themselves with vain circlings of how best to refute the malice of her foes and return upon their wicked heads the most of cruelty. Commonly I might be held as one not beyond touch of mercy, and indeed I have spared a painted Creek when he stood helpless. But I doubt me if Peg's foes, when by some sleight of fate they had fallen within my power, would have found a least loophole of relief. Of a verity! I think I might have looked long on

their writhings ere my heart was touched or my hands raised to stay their tortures.

While I sat in this blood-mood, and shedding in imagination the lives of ones who would persecute our innocent, my glance was caught by the General's pistols lying near by on a table. They were of that long, duelling breed belonging with the times, and the General kept them as bright and new as he kept his honor.

"And why are those on parade?" I asked, pointing to the weapons.

"It is the day of the year," said the General, and his steady voice was low, "whereon I killed Dickenson. This is the one I used," and he stretched his long arm and offered it for my inspection. It had a ribbon of black about the butt. "That is not for Dickenson," he explained; "it is for her." Here he indicated that miniature of his wife from which he would never be parted, where it rested on the mantel and looked down upon us with the painted eyes.

"You speak in a queer way," I said; "do you regret killing the man?"

"No," he returned, half sadly; "I do not regret killing him."

"Tell me of it," I urged. "I was not about, and Overton went with you to the field."

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

The General never named his fight with Dickenson to others, but I was sure he would tell the tale to me. In good truth, I had not asked for it, save that, knowing him far better than I knew myself, I saw what was in his manner to make me believe he would be the lighter after the relation.

"Dickenson," said the General, making no flourish of talk in explanation of a readiness to describe adventures which some folk for the red ending might have shrunk from; "Dickenson was the tool of a conspiracy made against my life, and politics was at the bottom of it. I was too popular; I was in the way; the grave was a place for me; thus argued my enemies. And then they went about to draw in Dickenson to be their cat's-paw.

"Dickenson was young and vain, and withal willingly cruel enough to act as my murderer for the illustration it would bring. He counted himself safe, since he was reckoned the surest, quickest hand in all the world. The man could shoot from the hip like a flash, and as accurately as one might put one's finger.

"Once the plan was laid, Dickenson took a sure course; he spoke evil of my wife." Here the General picked up the two pistols, a butt in either hand, and looked first upon the one and then upon its fellow. "Following my

marriage, with every dollar I owned, I bought these pistols. They are hair-triggers and a breath unhooks them. Also, they are sighted 'o shoot as fine and as true as the moral law. I gave to their purchase my last dollar, and devoted them to the destruction of what scoundrels should vilify my wife. They have done their work and never failed me.

"Overton was to act my second, and we would fight in Kentucky, sixty miles away. All day we traveled; the Dickenson party preceded us over the same trail. At every squatter's cabin the inmates would call us to the wizard work of Dickenson. Here he shot the head from a fowl; there he cut the string by which a gourd was hanging; now he drove a nail at twenty paces. It was a trick to shake my nerve.

"We would fight in the early morning, each standing to a peg twelve paces apart. Overton won the word and the pistols. I was dressed in a black coat, loose and long, and with no white to show at the throat and coax a bullet. We were given our places, I to my joy with my favorite pistol.

"It was conceded by Overton and myself, as we went up and down the business in advance, that Dickenson would kill me. Our

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

hope was that I'd last long enough to kill him—he, the defamer of my wife!

"The thought on our side was for me to brace myself and take Dickenson's fire. I could not rival him for quickness or for sureness. And the haste of an attempt would waste and throw away my aim.

"We were put up, I say; the words were to be 'Fire—one—two—three—stop!' We might fire at any moment between 'Fire!' and 'Stop!' And Overton had the word. As I took my place I slipped a bullet into my mouth. I would set my teeth on it to steady my hand.

"Overton cried the word and began the count. With the word 'Fire!' Dickenson's weapon flashed. I heard the roar of it, and felt the numb, dull shock as the lead crashed into my side. But I sustained myself. I was held on my feet by hate. I thought he had slain me, but with him out of hell I would not rest in my grave.

"When I did not fall, but stood firm, Dickenson started back.

"'My God, I have missed him!' he cried.

"'Step to your peg, sir,' roared Overton, pausing in his count and cocking a pistol; 'step to your peg, or I'll blow your head from your body!'

"Dickenson stood again to his peg and turned his eyes from me; his face was the color of tobacco ashes.

"Overton resumed his count. 'One!'

"'Click!' My pistol caught at half-cock.

"Overton paused and I re-cocked my pistol; Dickenson white and firm to his peg—a man who had played his life away.

"'Two!' cried Overton.

"My pistol responded; the lead tore its way through the midst of Dickenson's body. He crippled slowly down on one knee; and then he fell along on his face, and next turned over on his back with a sort of twitching jerk. I never took my eyes from him."

"And your wound," said I, "was a serious one, I well know that."

"My ribs were broken, while my boot was clogged with the blood which ran down beneath my garments. The bullet I placed between my teeth was crushed as flat as a two-bit piece."

"It was hardy work," said I, "bearing up and firing on the heels of such a wound."

"Sir, I was thinking on her"—glancing at the miniature. "I should have killed that man though he had put his bullet through my heart."

Here the General turned his face towards

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

me; his eyes were shining with the lambent orange glow one sees in the panther's eyes at night.

There was silence, I still looking on the General. His nervous face was twitching. Then the frown on his forehead gave way to quiet sadness. Rising, he stood by the mantel and gazed for long, and tenderly, on the miniature of his dead dear one.

"I have had many titles," said he, and he spoke whisperingly and as though talking with the picture; "I have had many titles, and the greatest was the one 'her husband.' I have had honors;—I stand the chief of the greatest nation in the greatest age the world has witnessed; and I would give all to hold her hand one moment. They say there is a heaven above us. It will be no heaven unless I meet her there."

Now while I was in warmest sympathy with the General, his talk would seem to fill me up with darkness. Also, I could feel the two hot arms of Peg burning my neck. That story, too, of the Dickenson fight may be supposed to have set in my nature that animal which lairs within each of us, somewhat on truculent edge. Abruptly I burst forth:

"And it is a surprising thing," cried I—ripping out an oath, the last not common with

me—"how Eaton abides Peg's wrongs. He should have killed a man or two by now."

"Sir," returned the General, coming from his reverie with a kind of snap, "sir, no man since Catron has been known to speak a word. Besides, my cabinet men can not go trooping off for Blandensburg at any price. It is one of the drawbacks to a high position of state that it chops one's hands off at the elbow; duels are no longer a question."

"I do not see it thus," I retorted viciously.

"You do not? Look on Aaron Burr—deserted and old and poor, and dying in New York. He came down from his vice-presidency to slay one who had maligned him for years. And there is his reward."

"What do I care for that?" cried I. "If it were for Peg, I should leave a throne and perish poor, despised and all alone, but I would strangle the throat that spoke her wrong."

"Ah! if it were Peg!" And the General, now alert and wholly of this world, gave me that narrow intent glance I resented among the flowers.

What might have been uttered next was cut short by a messenger on the door. He brought word from Noah; he had just come

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

town, and since it was turned late he would defer his call until the morning.

"Let's have him with us now," cried the general, briskly. "I shall not sleep for hours; and you, I take it, will stay awake in such a use?"

"I would stand sleepless guard for weeks it were to defend Peg," said I.

"Think now and then, my friend, for your own defence." The General said this with a look both quizzical and grave. Then, without hesitating: "Write Noah a note in my name." While I scribbled he walked to and fro. "I must ever ask you to write for me, since I am so unfortunate as to deny a proverb and be the whose sword was ever mightier than his name."

In the hall I discovered Jim, and told him to depart with our message to the Indian agent.

"'Course I'll nacherally go, Marse Major," said Jim, "but I was jes' waitin' to see you-all, 'n' ask how soon you reckons we'll go caperin' back to Tennessee."

"Why," I demanded, "what has made you so soon homesick?"

"It aint that, Marse Major," and Jim gave him his words a melancholy whine, "but we-all can't stand d'pace yere. For a week Jim was

as happy an' chirpy as a drunkard at a barbe-cue. But since you locks that closet do', Jim's sort o' been obleeged to buy whiskey for him-se'f; an' what you think? They charge Jim five cents a drink for whiskey that don't cost two bits a gallon all along d'Cumberland! They's shorely robbers; an' they jes' nacherally takes Jim's money off him so fas' he cotch cold."

"Go on, you rogue!" said I. "Here is a Mexican dollar to bolster your finances. We're not yet bankrupt, Jim."

Noah came to us spattered of travel, and with the high riding-boots he wore on the road. I took a deal of pleasure for a buoyancy I observed in him, since I read it as a sign of whitest promise. Nor was I to be cast down from that hope.

"You are to know," said Noah, turning to the General, "that I was two days before your letter with the Reverend Ely. In the first of our conversations he held his head loftily; in the end, he came something under control. Your letter much dismayed him, and after that his courage ran very thin indeed. Now he quite agrees he knew nothing, and was wrong and false in all he wrote. I dragged him to New York with me. I have Mrs. Eaton's innocence here, in these papers." Noah laid a sealed package by the General's elbow. They were from the Rev-

THE SECRETARY, SUAVE AS CREAM

erend Ely, as well as from the folk of the hotel wherein that Ely said Peg lodged. "They are oath-made; they prove Mrs. Eaton chaste as snow."

"And how did you make conquest of this Ely?" questioned the General, his eye gratified and spirit a mate for Noah's.

"The power of the press, I should call it," laughed Noah. "The ignoble Ely hath a mighty distaste of unfriendly ink. And I'm an editor. That was it," went on Noah; "I showed him what might be done. He should stand in the pillory of my types for the reasonless defamer he was. Then the dog trembled and came my way with meekness, asking what he should do. I answered much like the monks with the wild Clovis, 'Bend thy neck, proud Sicambrian; adore what thou hast burned, burn what thou hast adored!' In short, I demanded a letter of retractory amends to the President; and also that he name his fellow reptile, whose infamous word he claimed for the truth of his scurrility."

"And who is he?" demanded the General, as warm as ever I saw him.

By some virtue of telepathic sort, I read the answer before Noah uttered it. And why had I not guessed before! The secret one so falsely in the ear of the shallow Ely was none other than the unctious Reverend Campbell.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

Next morning the sun had not climbed over-high when the Reverend Campbell, head down and secret eye aslant, came shuffling to call upon the General. I caught the black shadow of him—for all the world like the shadow of some vulture to sail between one and the sun—as the drooping, furtive creature sidled through the hall. The General had sent for him, for the General was not one to let the grass grow deep between resolve and action.

“I will see the man alone, Major,” observed the General; “he might complain, were you present, of a situation offering two against one and planned to over-ride him.”

Such management was much to my appetite, since it would but serve to boil my anger—this listening while the Reverend Rogue laid out his pack of calumnies upon Peg. In good truth! I much misdoubt if I had withstood my hands from him when under such honest provocation; and that, maugre his black surtout and pulpit snuffle.

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

And yet it did not miss me as a feature hard to be read for its significance, that now was the earliest time when the General had shown himself so equitable as to think on "two against one" and fail to ask my presence for his conferences. He had met folk for war and peace, and they had come alone; I had been there, and no one spoke of over-riding. However, the subject was not worth quizzing one's self concerning; the Reverend Campbell was come, the best thing about it being that the General lived ample and to spare to arrest whatever of slander he should bring us in his mouth, and put it to the death. The General could track a lie as surely as ever he tracked Creek, and lived even more inveterately its enemy.

Peg met the Reverend Campbell almost in the great front door, for she was on her usual journey to consult with me about some trifling nothing. When his sidelong glance encountered Peg's, the rascal cowered and seemed to turn more mean, if that were possible, than by nature belonged with him. But he said no word; he did not so much as muster against her one square look, but sinuously, and as a snake might, writhed himself out of her path. Peg, for herself, swept him with a chill, intol-

erant eye as if he were some gutter-being, offensive though unknown.

"And what brings that bird of mal-omen to flutter about one's door?—so bright a morning, too!" This was Peg's question on the Reverend Campbell as she walked in to me and climbed to her customary chair at the left hand of my desk. "What should you say, watch-dog, was his bad mission? Is he a threat? Does he drag a danger after him? You must be alert if you would make safe your little Peg."

The tone of raillery which Peg adopted secured me; she had no surmise, then, to the purpose of the Reverend Campbell.

"It's quite sure," I returned, *evasively*, "that our swart visitor would be much uplifted were the General to relent and dispose of Florida according to his wish."

And now while Peg sits before the mirror of my memory with her sweet face, as she on that far morning sat in the great leathern chair, let me please my fond pencil with a word of her. There were so many expressions of the unexpected to our Peg—for so I had grown to call her—one must needs be describing and redesccribing her with each new page one turns. A born enchantress and a witch full-blown be-

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

sides! it is the mere truth that Peg bore upon me like a spell.

There was never woman to be Peg's marrow for flash and spirit, and beyond all to creep so tenderly near to one. And for a crown to that, she was as wise as the serpent. There were moments when Socrates himself might have listened to her and not lost his time.

And she could shift color like a chameleon. Behold her on some day of social parade, or where she meets strangers or half acquaintances, and she will be older by fifteen years than now when she plants her small self in that armchair, and makes me turn my writing downward to talk with her. Tender, wilful, pliant, wise, patient, petulant, true, uncertain, sure, confiding and confusing, she offered contradictions equal with the General. I would exhaust the roll-call of the adjectives were I wholly to set forth this child-woman in the last of her frank arts and sage simplicities.

Peg wore as many moods as a lake on a flawy day and where skies are scud-swept. Now, with a cloud across the sun, she would be dull and sad as lead. Then, with a gust of wind, she would wrinkle into waves of temper. And next there would dawn a tranquil moment

when, calm and clear and deep and sweet, she shone on one like burnished silver.

Once, I recall, she sat in her big chair, steeped in a way of pensive wordlessness. I had not heard her voice for an hour; nor she mine, for I was fallen behind in my letters, and politics and president-making are mighty gluttons of ink. Suddenly she broke in:

"Why are you so good to me—so much more than any other?"

"How should one fail of sympathy," said I, giving my manner a light turn, "for another so innocent and so ill-used?"

"And it's just sympathy—all sympathy?" demanded Peg, resting her round chin in her little shell of a palm. "Nothing but sympathy?"

"What else should it be?"

"I don't know," said Peg, shortly. Then she walked slowly across the room and studied a picture. In a moment she gave a word to me over her shoulder: "I may tell you this, Mr. Questioner. There is but one question a man should put to a woman."

Smiling on her jaunty petulances, I went forward with my writing; she to pulling out the slides of a cabinet. This apartment, I should tell you, was my private workshop of politics wherein I repaired and extended the

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

destinies of the General, and transacted his fame for him. There were a world of history and one president—and say the least of it—constructed in that room.

Peg came presently to my elbow, bringing a trinket of coral. It had been my sister's, and was my mother's before that.

"Is it worth much money?" asked Peg.

"Nothing at all," I returned.

"And yet you value it highly?"

"Very highly."

"May I have it?"

It seemed shame to hesitate, and yet I did, while Peg stood with wistful face.

"Why," said I at last, "I meant it for the one I should love."

"Oh, you meant it for her whom you would love! And do you look to see it again after that? The coral is mine from this moment."

With a swish of her skirts Peg was gone; and with her went the coral.

Peg betimes would lay out her campaign for the coming winter. It was then she talked of Van Buren, "the good little secretary," as Peg named him. Van Buren went often to the Eatons; and on each of those kind excursions he climbed ever higher with the General and with me.

"Not only," said Peg, assuming a wise

pucker of the brow as she recounted how she should wage and win her social war, "not only shall I preside for our good little secretary at dinners and receptions, but he has brought to me the Viscount Vaughn, who is minister for the English, and Baron Krudener, who is here, as you know, for the Russians; and they, since they own no wives to help them, also have besought me to be at the head of their legation functions. And with the White House back of all, what then will Mrs. Calhoun and her followers do! Watch-dog we have them routed!" Here Peg's rich laugh would ring out for victory on its way.

Peg, on another day, would shake her head with soft solemnity.

"I do so wish some one watched over me." Peg spoke in contemplative earnestness. "If I could find a fault in a best of husbands, it must be that he doesn't watch over me."

"What idleness now claims your tongue?" said I, impatiently. "Was ever such nonsense uttered! And the wives should all turn ospreys, too, I take it, and haunt the upper air to watch their husbands?"

"No," returned Peg, demurely reading the carpet, "no; a wife should never watch her husband. What should you think of her who, dwelling in a garden—a measureless garden of

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

roses—went ever about with petticoats tucked up, stick in hand, questing for some serpent? Who is she, to be so daft as to refuse the fragrance of a thousand blossoms to find one serpent and be stung by it?" Peg crowed high and long, deeming herself a princess of chop-logic. "But a man should watch a woman," she concluded; "the woman wants him to."

"And why?" said I, becoming curious.

"Because she likes to feel herself tethered by his vigilance."

"But why?" I insisted. "Is not freedom dear to a woman?"

"Yes, but love is more dear. See what she gains when she barter only a little freedom for a world of love."

"I had not thought a woman set such store by jealousy—the green eye turned against herself."

"Jealousy—a man's jealousy is but the counterpart of his love." Peg lifted her clever head oracularly. "And, watch-dog, that reminds me"—here she admonished me with upraised finger—"you are jealous of me! Yes you are; you are jealous of my husband."

"You are a confusing form of little girl!" I said, laughing in my turn; "and most confusing when you jest."

"Yes; when I jest." This in a way of funny dryness. "Especially, when I jest. Still, you are jealous; you watch me all the time. Do not look frightened; I do not object to jealousy." Peg finished in a mirthful ripple.

"I would not see you walk into harm," said I, meekly.

Perhaps I was thus meek because the small hectorer would stir up confusion in my bosom; and she, cool, assured, mistress of situations it was her merry humor to create.

"You would not see me walk into harm," she repeated. "But you are jealous of my husband. Is my husband 'harm?'"

"Do you not complain for that he does not watch you?"

This I said desperately. It is not a hand's-breadth behind a miracle how a girl—and you a steady man of years, and twice her age—will wrap you in perplexities like a parcel. It was so with me; the witch would wind and unwind me as though I were a ball of knitting-yarn! She would darn and patch her laughter with me!

"Watch-dog," said Peg, severely, "watch-dog, you know you are jealous! And how long do you count it since I told you that jealousy was but love turned upside down?" This came off trippingly, and with superior

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

wave of wrist, as settling a thing beyond debate. Then with a tinge of tenderness: "Watch-dog, being so trusted, what would you do for me?"

"I would be a slave for you," said I, simply enough, "if it were to do you good."

"Qualification," cried she, with a vicious stamp of her foot, "always qualification!" Then mimicking me: "'If it were to do me good.' Good!—good!—what a desert of weariness in four letters! If I were to discover some unnamed desolation, some barren waste, one arid, gray, dry, dead—especially dead—I'd turn geographer and call it 'Good.'"

Peg was quiet after this upheaval, which was with it all but a surface impatience and nothing deep, and uttering never a word, gazed over against the wall. On my side, I made no return; for I was grown used to her whims, and knew they were not to be argued with. And most fatal of all was agreement. A best course would be to reply nothing, whether of denial or comment or endorsement, but let Peg talk her talk out unrestrained.

However, catching the fashion of her with the fringe of my eye as I went for more ink on my pen, and observing her face to seem over sad and considerate, I spoke up to cheer her.

slouched away for all mankind like unto some henroost fox of the night whom daylight had surprised and who now went skulking for the comforting safe darkness of his burrow.

"It is wonder," said Peg, "what could induce the good General to tolerate the presence of our Reverend Raven for so long. What should be the interest in his croakings?"

As Peg spoke, the General's gaunt form appeared in the door. He was more than half warm with an angry excitement. Without pause or first words of greeting, he addressed himself to Peg.

"Child, where was Timberlake two years ago this summer?—where was he in June?"

"Here in Washington," returned Peg, her eyes full of wonder, as she scanned the face of the General in quest of a clue to his sharp, unusual curiosity. "He stayed here idle for four years before he last sailed. He was seeking to adjust his accounts as purser for the frigate *President*. His books were lost when the English captured the ship. It was that to make all the trouble; the red-tape of the navy office detained him here four years before it would accept his accounts. It was during that period we were wed." Peg's voice, brisk at the start, fell sorrowfully away towards the end.

"Then he was here in June two summers

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

Peg, now in a climax of bubbling spirits, and pouring a spoonful of water on her handkerchief, washed off the spots of red, transferring them to her tiny square of cambric. This she contemplated with a sort of surprised delight, as tendering a new idea.

"I need never wash that, at any rate," said she. Then with her glancing eyes on me: "You will wear my mark now;—Peg's mark for her slave!—who would do her good."

The next moment she went singing across the lawn for her home, leaving me to think on the caprices of our radiant, reckless, blooming, madcap Peg. All this by the way, however; now to return to our day of the Reverend Campbell's call upon the General.

Peg was still curled in her big armchair when, following his interview with the General, the Reverend Campbell left the mansion. It was she who told his departure to me where I wrought at my desk. Peg caught a flutter of him through the large window.

"Oh!" cried Peg, "there goes our Reverend Raven."

Looking up from where I worked, I beheld the Reverend Campbell making speed out of the grounds. In such hurry was he that he left the walk of gravel, and to save a corner would cut across the grass. The black-foot creature

slouched away for all mankind like unto some henroost fox of the night whom daylight had surprised and who now went skulking for the comforting safe darkness of his burrow.

"It is wonder," said Peg, "what could induce the good General to tolerate the presence of our Reverend Raven for so long. What should be the interest in his croakings?"

As Peg spoke, the General's gaunt form appeared in the door. He was more than half warm with an angry excitement. Without pause or first words of greeting, he addressed himself to Peg.

"Child, where was Timberlake two years ago this summer?—where was he in June?"

"Here in Washington," returned Peg, her eyes full of wonder, as she scanned the face of the General in quest of a clue to his sharp, unusual curiosity. "He stayed here idle for four years before he last sailed. He was seeking to adjust his accounts as purser for the frigate *President*. His books were lost when the English captured the ship. It was that to make all the trouble; the red-tape of the navy office detained him here four years before it would accept his accounts. It was during that period we were wed." Peg's voice, brisk at the start, fell sorrowfully away towards the end.

"Then he was here in June two summers

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

ago," said the General, "and for three years prior and almost one year after that time?"

"Yes," said Peg.

"Now there!" cried the General, with a mixture of wrath and disgust; "see what bald and easily confuted falsehood a fool moved of low malice will tell! I could believe at times, when I'm brought face to face with such mendacious simplicity, that liars are denied powers of reflection."

"What is it all about?" asked Peg.

"Nothing, child, nothing," returned the General. "Now run away home; I want a word with your big playmate here." Then in a softer manner: "No, child, the Major and I are trying to do you a service, and please God! I think we shall accomplish it."

The whole kind attitude of the General towards Peg seemed ever that of a father, and he was used to call her to him or dismiss her with no shade of rudeness, truly, and yet with no more of ceremonies than an affectionate parent might adopt. Peg never grudged obedience, and received the General's word as readily, and was withal as free of affront at any suddenness, as should be a daughter who feels her place assured.

When Peg was off for home, the General came and sat in the chair she had vacated.

With the white thick brush of his end-wise hair, and the fierce eyes of him, he made a portrait wide apart from that tender one the great chair so lately framed.

"You are not to know," quoth the General, without halting for my question, "the whole foul story this creature has told me. It is bad enough that I was made to give ear to it. The point lies here: If Timberlake were with Peg in June two years ago, and for a year before, this miserable tale falls to the ground as false. He makes its main element to depend upon Timberlake's absence—his charge of iniquity against Peg holds only by that. The Reverend Serpent's hinge to swing his vilification on is the absence of Timberlake. And you heard her declare how Timberlake was here."

"Does this snake, as you rightly term him, give you his story as of a knowledge of his own?"

"No; he hides behind the words of two women; a mother and daughter, named Craven. They pretend to base their slanders on what they allege was told them by the husband and father, a Doctor Craven—dead, he is, these ten months."

"And that is mighty convenient," said I, "for the Reverend Campbell and his fellow ophidians—this retreat to the word of one

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

who dwells dead and dumb beneath six feet of earth."

"That is their coward strategy," commented the General, furiously. "However, my thought is to ask Noah to visit these women and question them before the Reverend Campbell collects the wit to tell of his talk with me. I may have alarmed the man, for I was now and then not altogether calm."

I was driven to smile at this; so much concession of a want of calmness on the General's part would mean that he had fumed up and down like a tiger. The scuttling eagerness of the Reverend Campbell to be clear of the place was not without a cause. There beat some reason in his heels.

"I asked him," said the General, "why he did not tell this story in the beginning. He explained that he hesitated to approach me with it; he related it to Doctor Ely, who pretended to close terms with me. Then I demanded why this Ely had not told me by word of mouth? Why should he leave with that lie in his stomach, and then write it and send it by post? He said that when it came to the test, Doctor Ely was afraid of me. Fear, fear, that was the assassin excuse of him, and the reason for striking at a woman in the dark! Why, I

would not believe the sun was shining on the words of such coward rogues!"

It was settled that I should make company for Noah when he saw the Cravens.

"But don't interfere for a word, Major," exhorted the General, with a world of earnestness. "You do right well when the quarry is a bear or the enemy no more subtle than an Indian. But now the foe is a woman, you might better fall to the rear and leave leadership to Noah. You are monstrous ignorant of woman."

The Cravens lived no breathless distance up Georgetown way. Not far from their doorstep, Noah and I encountered the Reverend Campbell, who seemed shaken by the meeting.

"Nothing could be better," cried Noah, cheerfully, claiming the Reverend Campbell's arm. "You shall present the Major and myself to the ladies. And please permit me to do the talking; you may have your turn at the conversation when we leave."

The two women were bilious, lime-faced folk, and the daughter notably ugly. I was something stiff, I fear; but Noah, when introduced by the Reverend Campbell, showed as balmy as a day in May. He swept the pair with rapid glance and then turned to the daughter.

"I shall pitch upon the one I deem the more manageable," said Noah, on our journey to the house, "and when I commence to talk with her, you engage with the other."

Having this hint in my mind, when Noah began to address the daughter I favored the other with a word or two on safe topics, principally the weather and the condition of the roads. For all that, I could tell how the other, like myself, had her ears laid back to catch the words of the others. Her suspicions were upon us from the start, even with the guaranty of the Reverend Campbell's company. As for that perturbed animal, he looked only upon the floor, saying never a syllable, and rubbing one warty hand with the other in a composite of doubt and trepidation. The magic wrath of the General still sang in the care-heated creature's head.

"We are being shown about by our reverend friend," I heard Noah say; "we were asked to make a few calls with him and meet the better folk. We were too glad, I assure you; I grow vastly weary of nobody save the politicians and nothing better to talk of than politics."

To say that I was startled at these gay, lib fictions on the lips of my companion could fall behind the fact; I was amazed. But

I also had the General's command to leave leadership to Noah, and so stood mute. I let my gaze go for a moment to the Reverend Campbell to come by some thought of how he took the trend of Noah's surprising discourse. I saw naught beyond the top of his head, as, bowed forward in his chair, he appeared to study his toes, meanwhile twiddling and rubbing his nobby fingers.

As for the women, they knew no argument of fact or otherwise for distrusting Noah's statements. I should have before explained that neither possessed the least of glimmer as to our identity or nearness to the General. Indeed, they lived ignorant, we found later, of the letters of that Ely ill-using Peg's name, and of the Reverend Campbell's visit to the General paid that morning. Thus, it fell about that the daughter sailed off with Noah on a current of conversation in the dark, and the mother just as blind.

"And so," Noah went on, "you are a copyist in the Department of Justice." This from her explanation and his notice of a stain of ink near her finger-nail, for this daughter was an untidy slut. "The Department of Justice!" repeated Noah. "And there is something consistent in your employment in such a field, since Justice is a woman--and

ind." This last quip under his breath. "I n a close friend with Judge Berrien, the ttorney General, who heads your department. he great tie to unite us is our love for Caloun."

"Are you a friend of the Vice-President?" ked the daughter, her interest a little kindled.

"Perhaps partisan would be the truer ord," replied Noah. "I trust a good day will me when we are to drop the 'Vice' to his title d find him at home in the White House. nd you, I suppose, meet many of Calhoun's hererents in your Department of Justice?"

"Numbers, indeed," assented the daught-r, while the mother bent an intent ear, trying discover the drift.

By this time I could well make out how ither of these women was of vigorous intelligence. A malignant spirit, and a ripe apt-ss for evil to others. I could read in their negar faces and the fault-finding gather to eir brows; but no power of thought, nor t much cunning. I leaned back now, inquisi-ve as to Noah's methods and to note their sults.

Noah led the talk up and down the town. e made it cover several years, for the Cravens re not newcomers in the place. At last he nsidered the navy and mentioned Timber-

lake. Had the young lady known the handsome purser Timberlake? The young lady had known the handsome purser Timberlake. A forbidding scowl contorted her features as she said this.

"Oh, I beg a thousand pardons!" cried Noah. He had caught the scowl. "I fear the mention of the handsome Timberlake is not agreeable. But he cut his throat, and there's the proper villain end of him."

The butt-end cruelty of Noah's manner I was sure possessed a purpose, for commonly he was one of your most guarded of folk. While I had this in thought, it did not lessen my dismay when the daughter fell to weeping with her face in her hands, and all in frantic kind. Sobbing, she left the room.

"An affair of the heart?" cooed Noah, sympathetically, to the mother, while the Reverend Campbell fidgeted visibly.

"Sir," said the mother, loftily, "you touched her rudely. Mr. Timberlake was paying my daughter marked attentions, and ones not to be misunderstood, when he was stolen from her side and trapped to the altar by that wanton, Peg O'Neal."

"Sorry, I assure you," murmured Noah, apologetically. "Sorry I so blundered against

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

your daughter's sensibilities. Please recall her, madam, if only to hear me ask forgiveness."

The daughter, whose emotion was of the briefest, returned, with nose reddened and look more bilious than before. Noah became profuse in his regrets, and severely characterized his own awkwardness.

"Nor are you to have blame for your feeling," said he, addressing the daughter and as a finish to his self-reproaches. "Your mother has done us the honor to confide the once nearness of the handsome purser Timberlake to you. And that hideous woman who stole him away! I do not marvel you hate her. I could teach you to write her such a letter as should be a revenge; for I know one of her secrets, the very name of which would crush her like a falling tree."

It was to me a thing astounding how neither of these women resented the raw freedom of Noah's words. On the contrary, they went with him, making no question of the propriety of such talk on the tongue of a stranger. They would appear not to have been crossed by such a thought, for, so to phrase it, they fell in with Noah, and, as if it were, hand in hand.

At the word "secrets," both women sat bolt upright and questioned Noah with

tongue and eye. What was this hidden sin of that siren, Peg O'Neal? They panted for a fullest tale of it.

"Nay, then," remonstrated Noah, "it was but a slip. I said I could teach you how to write a letter that should strike her to the soul. But of what avail? Timberlake is dead; his grave is the Mediterranean."

"But she lives," hissed the daughter. "Tell me that secret concerning her, and I shall call you my best friend." Truly, the bilious maiden had a taste for vengeance as pointed as a thorn.

"Why, then," returned Noah, hesitating with invented reluctance, "there is no reason why I should not humor your wishes. Take your pen, and I'll dictate that letter I have in my mind."

The bilious one wheeled about to a writing table which stood by her side, and ~~while the~~ rest of us sat silent—for the mother and myself had long before surrendered our semblance of conversation, and the unhappy dominie still pored upon the floor—Noah began with finger on forehead as one who cudgels memory.

"Write her this," said Noah. "Revenge is sweet! I have you in my power; and I shall burn you as savages burn their victim at the stake. Think not that you can escape me. I

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

would not that death nor any evil thing should take you out of my hand for half the world."

When Noah began this evil dictation, the lime-faced one took down his opening words with greedy pen. As he proceeded, she first hesitated, and then with blanched, scared face, whirled herself upon him. Her pen fell to the floor, while her hands shook in a gust of fear. At the close she gasped:

"You have read my letter!"

"I have, indeed," returned Noah. "I have repeated word for word your atrocious threats to a lady whom we will not name." It was verity; with a memory like unto wax, Noah had recalled with every faithfulness of word and mark that menacing epistle Peg brought to me, and which was then under my private lock and key. "Yes, you wrote that letter," repeated Noah. "And you," coming round on the Reverend Campbell, who writhed as one in the jaws of wretchedness, unable to make a plan or frame a sentence; "and you, sir, were privy to it."

"Our dear sister"—he could not lay aside his snuffle even now—"our dear sister did indeed tell me she had sent such a note."

"You mix your tenses, sir," retorted Noah, savagely. "She told you before it was dispatched, and you read it."

"My dear gentlemen," broke in the mother, in mighty agitation, "he put that letter in the post himself. Oh, gentlemen, spare my poor daughter!" With that the mother put her arm about the younger harpy, where, like some frightened thing of sin that can escape no farther, she waited as one frozen.

"Your daughter, madam," replied Noah, quietly enough, "lies in no peril, although by the law there be punishments for ones who thus misuse the post. But there remains another question. You have put a lie against that lady of the letter into the mouth of our reverend friend. He has retold it to many; this morning he told it to the President. The tale proves itself untrue upon its face, and that is the one merit of it. It was a dangerous falsehood to tell, and"—here Noah looked towards the unhappy Reverend Campbell, who, as though fascinated by the other's baleful eye, lifted up his visage, with its ugly array of munching mouth and flabby unhealthfulness—"and a still more dangerous falsehood to repeat."

"What do you require of us, gentlemen?" asked the frightened mother-harpy.

"Nothing, save tongues of peace," cried Noah. "It is too much to suppose that her friends will rest quiet while you foully tear a

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

good woman to shreds. Tie up your tongues, you three, and the thing rests. Let another word escape, and a torch shall be found to burn you out like any other nest of adders."

The Reverend Campbell made no return to this warning thrown to him with the others. The scoundrel had the wisdom of silence when words would work no benefit. Still, I could trace a hunger for retaliation writhing beneath the coarse snake's skin of him.

"I think we have locked three evil mouths to-day," observed Noah, as we were about our return. "It is the less important, perhaps, since already a whole flock of these lies has been uncaged in the town."

"It is never unimportant," I returned, "to identify an enemy. I am the more relieved, too, since you cleared up the mystery of that written menace. And yet I do not make out how you supposed it gained emanation among these people."

"I had no such thought in the beginning," replied Noah. "I knew, as did you, and with a glance, how our entertainers were nothing fine nor deep, but of a harshest clay and of least intelligence. No more delicacy was required than might do for driving pigs. At first I sought to develop their whereabouts, and stormed the

woods with my remarks. In that, and on the sheer chance of it, I employed the name of Timberlake. The daughter's disturbed features were a cue. And you know the rest. The digging up of the authorship of the letter was but the birth of a bold guess. However, we've paralyzed that trio of tongues, which is excellent as far as it goes. And we must beat out these fires wherever we find them. Else they will spread, and may come to mean a conflagration that shall burn some one to a cinder."

"And going back for cause," I said, my thought recurring to Peg, "I still can not tell the hound purpose of this incessant, malignant pursuit of our little girl."

"Sir, they reason in this guise," returned Noah. "As I've told you, the great impulse springs from the adherents of Calhoun. They desire the destruction of the President as a method of their man's advancement. They fear that the President will seek to succeed himself—there has been illustrious example—or, in default of that, insist on selecting his successor. They attack Mrs. Eaton in hope of its reaction against the administration. Suppose, sir, they make her out to be vile, suppose they show the administration as condoning and defending her vileness, will they not have or-

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

ganized the women against us? Give Calhoun the women of the country to be his allies, and he will go over the administration like an avalanche."

"But you"—now I spoke gingerly, for I would not hurt so true a friend nor ruffle him with himself—"in your pretense of friendship for Calhoun, and as well in other particulars, misled our harpy folk."

"I but fought the devil with fire and snared liars with lies," said he. "These she-villains were not entitled to the truth. Only truthful folk have a right to truth."

When the General and I were together, I laid before him those ethics or word-morals of Noah; he stoutly agreed with that diplomat.

"One is not always bound to tell the truth," asserted the General. "Would you tell a footpad whose gun was at your breast where you lodged your money? In war, would you disclose your strengths or your plans to the foe because he asked? Sir, truth is a property—a goods; to have right to it one must possess title to it. The casual man, and the more if he would work me harm, has as scant a right to search my head with his questions as to search my pockets with his fingers. Take my word for it, Major,"—this in high Delphic vein, for the General was growing pleased with

his argument—"take my word, sir; the right in the one is the right in the other, and he who may lock a door may lie."

"These harpies," said I, commenting on what had befallen, "and the Reverend Campbell have fair admitted their guilt."

"Why, as to that, sir," returned the General, "the falsity of the story was never in doubt. But the prime thing is to smother out these calumnies. It is not hard to see how this day has been well spent."

In concord with what we had long before agreed, neither the General nor I, by lisp or the lifting of an eyebrow, gave Peg a least intimation of what had gone forward about her name and fame. And yet, she must have divined her close interest, for in the early hours of the twilight she came again to the General, saying she remembered books of account kept by Timberlake's own hand, which would demonstrate his whereabouts for those four years. Her mother, Peg said, had these books in her house.

"Why, then," said the General, "that should give us the best evidence. Major, go you with the child to her mother's and bring me those books."

It was not the first call I had made on Peg's mother, but this night the garrulous old

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

soul would so launch herself upon wide waters of gossip, and never quit until she crossed them from shore to shore, that it leaned towards ten of the clock when Peg and I, taking the road in our hands, as say the Spaniards, went forth for our return.

The night was dark and still, and a moist promise of rain hung in the air. Our way lay from the south, diagonally across the wooded patch called the Mall. We were finding our path without trouble, Peg keeping close and warm to my side, with a hand gripping my arm, and had gone some distance when, in a way of dull faintness, a sound like the fall of a stealthy foot on the grass overtook my ear. Peg heard it as soon as I.

"Are we dogged?" she asked. Peg showed no fear, but bit off her words in a manner vicious and resentful.

"That we may soon know," said I. Then I drew her in by a clump of bushes where her white frock would be screened. "It should be a strange thing if any save ourselves were going this road at such an hour."

We had been but a moment hidden by the trees when a dark figure crouched past us with furtive, hurrying step that made it plain he followed as a spy. As he would have brushed by, I stretched out and seized him by

the shoulder. The creature screamed like a hare when the dogs snap her up.

Now I lugged him to the open, and, for all the night was moonless and no stars because of clouds, it puzzled neither Peg nor myself to make out the Reverend Campbell. The fellow hung in my hand like a rag, and beyond that first shrill screech uttered not a word.

“What shall I do with him?” I asked, still holding him in my grasp like something dead.

“Kill him!” cried Peg; “kill him with your great hands!” And then, while I was dumb before the sudden murderous fury of her tones, Peg began to plead the other way about. “Let him go free,” she said. “He’s not worth punishment. And yet it is sure he was after us as a spy.”

“I think,” said I, “it would do no harm to throw him in yonder water.”

Now in that day a chain of baby lakes lay along this portion of the Potomac fens, and one of these was glimmering on our near left hand. It was not deep; but muddy and grown up to lilies, and the home, besides, of certain sedate bullpouts and turtles and other stagnant fish that do not care for currents but love dead waters. These, since bullpouts and turtles be

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

in no manner hysterical animals nor nervous, would not suffer for any plumping of the spy into their midst; and, thus forming my resolve, I was for posting to its execution. My captive still swung limp and loose, for all the world as though he had fainted. I could not believe this last, however, and in any event I would throw him in among the lilies. If he were too far gone with fright to save his own life from drowning, it would mean no more than that I must wade to him and fish him ashore again.

Thus adjusted in my mind, I was on the brink of heaving him overboard, when with a touch of protest Peg stayed my arm.

"No," she cried, "let him go free."

"But a moment gone," I remonstrated, "and you were calling for murder with all its inconveniences. Now you interpose to stop a mighty proper punishment, for, I bethink me, it has been custom to duck spies in every age."

"Still, you must let him go," cried Peg. "I will not have you touch him." And she seized my hand with her little fingers.

With that I threw the caitiff creature on the grass; whereupon he rolled to his knees and extended his palms towards Peg. There was

something to roil me in the attitude, and to end that I pushed him over with my foot.

"Be off," I cried. "And you are to thank this lady for your dry clothes. You had been splashing among the lily-pads except for her."

Without retort, he scrambled to his soles and was gone like some foul shadow. His absence, of itself, relieved me, for the sight of him was like a blot.

"He would not resist, and so I made you let him go," said Peg.

"You would have it safe for cowards," I returned.

"It wasn't for that creature!" exclaimed Peg. She seemed to scorn me for a dullard. "No; it was for you. I would not have such a memory—you, punishing an unresisting beast!"

We were for a second time on our way, Peg now holding my arm with her two hands and laying her cheek against it like a child. I could tell by that how this bushwhacking rogue had fluttered her not a little. At last she lifted her face, and I could, even in the pitch darkness, catch the deep glow of her eyes.

"And after all, for what should you think he spied upon us? What should he hope to find?"

"Indeed, that is beyond me," I replied.

THE MAD CAPRICIOUS PEG

"But the very wicked are often very foolish too."

"To follow so right a character as yourself, watch-dog, is for a spy to waste his strength." Peg spoke in a droll way of laughter.

"Why, then, I may say I emulate the virtuous Drusus, who commanded the architect to so build his house that all who would might behold every act of his life." I must tell you I had studied the classics in my youth, and would like at times to flourish with a scrap or two. I was no pedant to show off my learning, only a tag or two from Ovid or Horace on occasion, and just enough to suggest what a deal I had forgot.

"And your Drusus would so live as to hide nothing." Peg was still stifling a laugh. "How very admirable! And what was the end of your memorable Drusus?"

"As to that," I retorted, puzzled and put about by the satirical toss she gave to her queries, "as to that, I believe the people stoned him to death."

"Ah, the poor people! His awful goodness, I suppose, drove them to frenzy." Peg's voice was mocking sympathy. Then, with a great abruptness of anger, and throwing away my arm: "Do you know what I think of your

precious Drusus? I think he was a hypocrite, and a canting prig who earned his fate; and if he have followers they should taste the same destiny for a sniveling conceit that teaches them a holiness above their neighbors." This Peg flung at me like a spoiled child; and then, stepping smartly, she went on alone, I following in silence a yard or more to the rear.

CHAPTER IX

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR.

Now fell across us the sultry summer; sometimes with rain, and steamy mud to follow; and then with stretches of a burning dryness when the dust curled aloft on the impertinent lip of the wind to fill folk's eyes and faces. There came, too, the shadow of impending calamity to rest upon us, for the General's health began to flag, and it would look for a while as though he had been marked by death itself. The malady was never understood by me, and I think the doctor lived no better off; but, as near as one might guess, it arose from the bogs and reeking marshes fringing the river on our south, and on which, morning and evening, I've seen the damps and miasmas lying white and thick as a flock of wool—a sight to shake the strongest.

The General was indeed ill, and with face turning to be wan while his haggard eye grew ever more bright and hollow. He lost greatly the use of his legs; those members being swollen to a preposterous size, and his feet dropsical, so that he could not be said to walk but only

hobble. He must be supported, leaning commonly on my arm, though sometimes Peg's pretty shoulder was his crutch; for she was with him very constant, reading to him, or passing him a glass, or cheering him with her talk of flippant nothings.

With his usual bitterness of resolution the General would each day be up and dressed, and pass the hours on a lounge which Augustus prepared, and where he might lie and through the open casement command a prospect of the distant Arlington hills.

To such a lowness did the General sink that his death was waited for, and the doctor who attended him—and did no good—felt driven to give him the name of it.

"For one who is in so high a place," said the doctor, "must needs have weighty concerns to be put in order; and therefore of all folk he should be shown his end in time."

This was gospel true enough as an abstraction, but in the case of the General that doctor should have known how his business was to cure, and not stand prating of death. Of this I informed him in such wise that he was at once for leaving the house and never coming back. The loss might have been easily measured had he done so.

It was the General himself who told me

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

he was to die; and it stood a marvel, the good patience and sympathy wherewith he went upon the information. One would have supposed it was of my death he talked.

"And in the bottom of it," said he, in conclusion, "I have the chance of meeting her"—pointing to his wife's picture—"and that chance alone would make twenty deaths worth trying. For when we come to the end of it, Major, the heaven they talk of may be true." This last with a manner of reverie as when hope upholds conviction leaning to a fall.

As best it could, my nature fought against a belief that the General would die; but his own word overpowered me. The fear of it, when he told the news, went through me like a spear. Or it was as if a stone were rolled upon my heart.

Sick folk, for a rule, are impatient and sharply cross with those about, even with their best beloved. But the General would be the opposite, and was never more tolerant than now when he lay ill; and this kindness made it a privilege and a pleasure to be near him, and not a burden to be borne.

Peg, as I have written, was much with him—fresh and sweet as a cluster of violets, about a sick room she was worth her weight in drugs. And the General and she had never so

full a space for acquaintance before, and so each day he came to know Peg better and to love her more.

There existed throughout this summer a kind of truce in the crusade against Peg; the Reverend Ely had turned to be as mute as an oyster, while the Reverend Campbell and those harpies whom Noah so confounded were not only silent but deeply out of sight. There was neither sign nor rumor to come from them.

The books of account which Peg and I brought away from her mother's on the night when we were dogged, showed all Peg claimed. For the June her detractors spoke of in their lyings, and for three years before and well nigh a twelvemonth to follow, Timberlake was in town, and, after his wedding, constantly with Peg until he sailed. There was left no ground for argument, and that tale, as fatuous as it was wicked, fell, knocked on its sinful head.

As for the lurking Reverend Campbell himself, I caught sight of him but once. This was accident, and the pleasure of the shortest, for he dodged around a corner like the wind; and although—through an idleness of mind to see him going—I made speed to be at his point of disappearance, he, so to say, had exhaled. Into what dark crevice he crawled to hide from me I have no hint; but as if that

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

street corner were a corner of the universe and he spilled therefrom into the very abyss of eternity itself, I never afterward caught the picture of his tallow cheeks and festering, munching lips.

This peace for Peg was something due to a desertion of the town; for everybody—and women-folk especially—not tied by the leg to duties, went seeking cool comfort by the ocean or on the mountains.

Eaton himself made one of those who went away; he would have had Peg for company, but she urged—what was true, since the old lady had grown frail and weakly—that she ought not to leave her mother for so long a space. Eaton agreed with entire good humor to this, and so left Peg behind, and never a qualm or mark of hesitation, while he sought his ease by the sea.

Eaton from his own view-point might well spare Peg from his plans; he was extremely a man's man, and owning, withal, a hand for the bottle and a mighty promptitude for cards, would the better amuse himself with no wife to be a mortgage on his liberty.

Summer is for society what winter is to war; the forces lie all in quarters, and beyond caring for their arms or practicing a drill against the campaign day to dawn, there arises

nothing to be called a movement. Indeed, as I've explained, the women—who, as Peg would have it, are the fighting line—for the most part were fled to beach and hill. The town was in its sleep, and society would awaken it only with the advent of the snows.

In the last there were still our three cabinet wives, that is, the ladies Berrien, Branch, and Ingham, to be left about us. These would soon depart; but by this claim or that, they had been brought to lag behind when the great covey of their flounced fellows went whirring away to be cool. Peg never had visited these folk, nor they her, and on those few occasions when official exigency threw them together, the cabinet three, who, like the General's fleeting niece, were utterly beneath the sway of the Vice-President's wife—herself a woman of unquestioned place and breeding, and a natural queen, besides,—took heed to hold aloof from Peg. On her side, Peg passed them by or looked them through as though they had not been, and, if I am to judge, came off from these tiltings with prestige all undimmed.

It would have been as good as the play, were I not prey and spoil to so much soreness in the business, to have watched those tacit joustings of Peg with our old mailed warriors

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

of the drawing rooms. The dauntless Peg crossed glances with the most seasoned of her bad-wishers, and left them ever the worse for those thrustings. If she were wounded, no one learned the bleeding fact; and not even I should know. From the laugh to ring true, and the fine spirit of her, I was fain to conclude that Peg, so far from shrinking, joyed in such silken combats to take place among the flowers and with the music of orchestras stirring the blood; and in the last I am sure she did.

Berrien and Branch, and for that matter the clumsy Ingham, would with an invariable politeness, nicely measured to a hair, greet Peg whenever they met with her; and she would accept their courtesy in a cold way of elevation and as though our cabinet gentlemen came of the general press about whose very names she did not know and never would. On such lofty terms a fair peace was maintained, and nothing to rancorously rise above the majesty of a ripple to beat upon any one's shore.

The General might have preferred a better cordiality, but he could make no interference.

"If to step between a man and his enemy," he would say, "is to invoke a risk, how much more is he in danger who tampers with the feuds of women?"

For one, I much agreed with him, and we both looked on, idle of hand and tongue, while Peg met and foiled the "Redsticks," as the General named them.

Nor would Peg need our aid. I've seen no prouder, braver woman walk across a room, or one of a more nimble faculty or fortitude more broadly planted, than our Peg. My admiration spent its days to weave new wreaths for her.

It was the doting Ingham—he of our Treasury—to be witless enough to broach this business of feminine ice with Eaton. Ingham was a girthy person, and one's briefest consideration disclosed him for the vulgar Pennsylvania paper-maker he was. Short and thick of body, with thick legs, thick neck; even his tongue was thick, and his slow wits thickest of all. Of Ingham I shall not forget Jim's estimate.

"It aint for Jim," said that worthy, "to go talkin' sassy about no white gentleman; but as for dish yere Mr. Ingham, thar's a notion ag'in him which goes gropin' about through Jim like d'grace of heaven through a camp meetin'. That Mr. Ingham is mean; he's that mean if he owned a lake he wouldn't give a duck a drink. He's jes' about as pop'lar with Jim as a wet dawg; an' that's d'mortual fac'."

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

"You don't appear to carry a high estimate of our Secretary of the Treasury," said I.

"'Deed Jim don't, Marse Major," he replied. "An' jes' let Jim warn you-all. You don't want to disrecollect, Marse Major, that Jim's a heap sight older man than you be, an' while Jim don't deny he's been gettin' duller an' duller ever since you locks up that demijohn, still it's mighty likely Jim's wise an' wary to a p'int where you-all oughter listen."

"Go on," said I, "I'm listening."

"Course you-all is listenin'," agreed Jim; "of course you listens, 'cause you has got listenin' sense. That's what Jim likes about you. Now let Jim tell you, Marse Major; that Mr. Ingham's plumb selfish. Jim can see it in his eye. He's all right whilst he's haulin' fodder for his own stack, but you let your intrus run ag'in his, an' you hyar Jim! that Mr. Ingham 'ud burn your barn to boil his egg quicker than a mule can kick."

Ingham took up the subject of their wives' coldness with Eaton in an unexpected fashion. I have heard that he was thus set in foolish motion by a fear of trouble at ten paces with the war secretary, and would have placated him and missed a bullet. He stood under no cloud of peril, but that dove-like truth was yet to claim him. The General would have been his shield;

but Ingham, who regarded the General as chief among the fire-eaters, would be the last to suspect the news.

It was on the kibes of a cabinet meeting when Ingham approached Eaton.

"Sir," said Ingham, tugging nervously at his lapels, "sir, there is something of strain between our ladies, about which, if you'll permit, I should like word with you."

"Why, sir," returned Eaton, seizing the initiative, "I perhaps should tell you that I can not, in her social obligations, control my wife. That, sir, let me say, is work beyond a gentleman. My wife must be her own mistress; and while I know of no just cause why she should refuse to receive or recognize Mrs. Ingham, I must still insist how the right to do both lies wholly in her hands. Personally, I may deplore my wife's refusal of the acquaintance of Mrs. Ingham; however, I stand none the less ready to give you any satisfaction you require."

With this speech, Eaton bent his brows upon the other in such way of iron menace that without a word our timid treasury gentleman clapped on his hat and went pantingly in quest of safer company.

"Was it not a master-stroke?" exulted the General, when he related the flurry. "Eaton

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

had the hill of him in an instant; Napoleon himself could not have exhibited a more military genius."

The General, in his glee, would talk of nothing else throughout the evening; but since I left him at an early hour I was not bored too much. Eaton replied in a manner to his credit when one considers the fact of a surprise; but there dwelt therein no reason for that long-drawn delight in which the General indulged. I was so far fortunate, however, as to soon quit him on that particular night, having work to look after, and so escaped his enthusiasm. Any childishness of satisfaction for little reason, by the General, obtruded offensively on my ideal of him, and I would experience no more of it than I might; wherefore I went about my affairs, leaving him in full song, celebrating the gallant cleverness of Eaton, who, to my notion, instead of his smart speeches should have pulled the Ingham nose.

While the General was sick on his lounge, and when Peg tired of reading, she would fall to a review of the unremitting politeness bestowed upon her by the suave Van Buren. One might read the pleasure of the General over these tidings in his relaxed face and the heed he offered to each detail. The word of how Van Buren had brought Vaughn of the English

and Krudener of the Russians—for these ministers were joint despots among the legation folk and led them to what social fields they would—gave the General peculiar satisfaction; and if there remained a door in his affections which had not yet opened to the little Knickerbocker, Peg's recitals of the secretary's steady yet delicately balanced goodness threw it wide.

When the General and I were alone with our nightly pipes—albeit he at the time would be in his bed for sickness—he made his little premier the great burden of his conversation and was wont to find in him new excellencies. Time and again he would quote Peg to me for virtues owned of Van Buren and which he feared might otherwise elude my notice. It was clear “the good little secretary”—Peg's name—was become a first favorite of the General; and to be frank, and for identical reasons, as much should be said of me. I loved any who was good to Peg, and made no bones of showing it. Wherefore, you are to conceive, there arose no dispute between us; instead, we took turn and turn about in exalting our secretary and teaching each other a higher account of the man.

Peg would set forth to the General—it amused him and he would question her con-

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

cerning such matters—how in this sort or in that, and always in some way of trifles too small for the mind of a man to seize on, the women who followed the social banner of the Vice-President's wife would strive to drive her into obscurity. And this was not wanting of stern effect on the General. The name Calhoun found constant repetition in these tales, and never to give the General delight. And there is this to observe: while Peg spoke of Mrs. Calhoun, the General, for his side, would be thinking only on the Vice-President, and at the end he held even more hateful views of the Carolinian than of Henry Clay himself. Surely, he came finally to be strung like a bow against him.

This vivacity of disfavor for Calhoun, however, may have had its story. Clay was a foe beaten beyond question, powerless for further war. Calhoun, on the other hand, was increasing in power; and, active in design and searching for the future, stood forth as an enemy yet to be conquered.

"The man is a would-be traitor," said the General one day when speaking with me of Calhoun and his lines of political resolve. "He should consider, however; I may yet teach him a better patriotism."

"He is for your destruction," said I, "and has been since the Seminole days."

"Nothing is more plain than that," said the General. "And yet, were he or his people fibered of any decency, they would not, as an element of assault on me, seek to make tatters of poor Peg. I can not see how they bring themselves to that; for myself, I would not give hand to so vile a ploy for all the world."

"They would plunge you in for Peg's defence," I said, recalling Noah's explanation. "They hope to set the women of the land upon you as he who gives countenance to one flagrant of her sins. That is their precious intrigue; they, with their lies of Peg, would shake your power with private home-loving folk whose firesides are clean and who base themselves on chastity. There you have the whole crow-colored scheme of them, with the black impulse which turns them against Peg."

"If they shake me with the people," said the General, "they should call it the thirteenth labor of Hercules."

"They should have punishment for all that," cried I.

"Sir, they shall be punished," retorted the General. "And as for Calhoun, he most of all shall suffer. Mark you this: That man shall never be president. More, he

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

may yet win Gilderoy's elevation at a rope's end." This last in wrathful whisper like a warning of death.

There was spreading reason to talk on Calhoun and his policies. South Carolina, ever arrogant, was moving to snap rebellious thumb and finger in the National face. The legislature of that insolent commonwealth had done its treason part; Nullification and its counterpart, Secession, were already agreed on; men were being enrolled and arms collected, while medals found Charleston coinage bearing the words, "John C. Calhoun, First President of the Southern Confederacy."

And the restless spirit to animate it all was no other than Calhoun himself. He was then among his henchmen of the Palmettoes, directing even the very phrases wherewith to deck their traitorous fulminations. So much the General knew, not alone from what Peg read daily in the papers, but by the weeded word of ones whom, safe and prudent, we dispatched to find the truth.

And yet, in the last, I was sure Calhoun would never mean rebellion and a severance of his state from the common bonds. On such terms he could not succeed the General for the presidency, which was his invincible ambition. What Calhoun hoped was, by a deafening

din of threat on his people's part of secession and rebellion, and every whatnot of stark treason besides, to browbeat the General to his will of Nullification; and thus by the one stroke to so fix himself in the van of victorious sentiment that no one might stay his march of White House conquest. And in good truth, thus argued the General.

"But he should beware," said the General. "Calhoun and his cohorts shall not steal a march on the old soldier. They must not go too far. A conspiracy to do treason exists, and Calhoun is at its head. But the mere conspiracy is not enough. Marshall lays it down how folk can not think treason, can not talk treason, and that treason to be treason must be acted. There must be the overt act; and though it be but the act of one, it attaches to every member of the conspiracy and becomes the treason of all. If one man so much as snap a South Carolina flint, that is an act to fall within the law, and the treason is the treason of Calhoun. I say, he should take heed for himself; whether he know it or no, the man walks among pitfalls."

"But you should be prepared," I said.

"We will go upon the work at once," returned the General. "Winfield Scott shall proceed to Charleston; the fleet shall convene in

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

the bay; Castle Pinckney shall have a hundred thousand stand of arms; and we will write to our old Indian fighters, Crockett and Coffee and Houston and Dale and Overton and the rest, to lie ready with one hundred thousand riflemen in Tennessee and North Carolina to overwhelm these rebellionists at the dropping of a handkerchief."

This converse, I recall, came off one afternoon when the General was in more healthful fettle than stood common during those days of fear for his life. Peg sat with us; indeed, it was news she gave us from a Charleston paper to bring down all this talk.

Peg, silent yet interested, listened while the General laid out his purposes.

"And if the Vice-President were taken for treason, what then?" asked Peg in a kind of innocence. "What would you do with him?"

"He shall hang, child," and the General spoke slowly and with a granite emphasis; "he shall hang as high as Haman! He shall be a lesson to traitors for all time."

It was then, and for the first time, as the General sank back spent, and in his weakness almost consumed of his own fires, there broke on me the whole peril of Calhoun. I knew the General too well to distrust the execution of his rope-and-gibbet threat. I was the more

confirmed when that evening he would have me go about a score of letters ordering the readiness of those ships and arms and men he had outlined. A cordon of power was to be thrown about Calhoun and the ground beneath him mined for his destruction.

Now if the General through this long summer grew to a better acquaintance with Peg, the same also might be told of me. And hardly a day was to dawn and die when in the unique turns and twists of her manifold nature she would not come upon me in a novel light. She was never to be twice the same, and my sluggish apprehension could scarce keep pace with the changes of her.

For a specimen, then, of how she would stand against me over a wrong claim, and her skill in its defence. One morning she had drawn me off to the northward for a walk. The day was by no means sultry, and a breeze was blowing and so induced a temperature which made the exercise a joy. We were rambling through a deep valley—Peg and I—which was the home of a brawling rivulet, and making a slow journey of it, since the way, broken by boulders and sown with thickets in between, was something of the roughest. While about this pleasant toil Peg broke forth:

“Do you see that vine?” Here she

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

pointed to a creeper, luxuriant and rich, which, failing of support to climb by, ran all about on the ground. "That vine is like me. It needs a trellis—asks some tall and strong tree to clasp and love and grow upon. Given a tree to touch the heavens, that loving vine would climb upward to kiss the heavens with her tree. Wanting her tree—poor vine!—she grovels about the ground. That vine and I are the same."

To this I offered no response, for I could not see how the matter called for debate; and then her fancy was like unto a shooting star, and no one might foresee its flight or prophesy its course. However, Peg did not ask reply. Away she plunged in a new direction.

"Should one control his love, to send it here or there like a dog?"

"Why," said I, "the thing is out of the question. One's love is not a creature of bit and bridle, to be guided as one guides a horse. I should say that no one controls his love, but is controlled by it."

"See there, now! A second Daniel!" cried Peg, with a little flicker of derision. For all that, I could tell how she agreed with me. She went on: "Then one is not to blame how one's love wanders, since one has it in no leading-string. Should one marry without love?"

"Of a verity! no," I retorted. "It would be to cheat the other of every chance of happiness."

"If one be not to blame," said Peg, in a wandering way of talk, "if one be not to blame for the birth of one's love, neither should one be blamed for its death. And if one is not to marry without love, one should not continue, the wife with the husband nor he with her, when love has met its end. You yourself have shown me the wrong of that. Ah, watch-dog! am I not right?"

"Now, in all my days," said I, "I have not been made to talk so much on love. The question is above me."

"You said folk should not wed wanting love." Peg paused to stamp her foot at me in saucy vehemence. "If that be true, then folk should not remain wedded wanting love. Do you not think, if a wife were to cease to love her husband, she should leave him? Does she not owe him that duty? And you have said, watch-dog, as you shall not forget, that her love, too, is not her fault."

"Still, I should deem it great pity," said I, "were a wife to leave her husband."

"And that is mighty loyal to vour friend," cried Peg, in a hot spurt of indignation. "Did not the General's wife leave a husband for him?"

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

It was well for both her and him they did not consult with you. She might have been unhappy yet, and he never happy at all." Then, gravely, following a pause: "watch-dog, you are dull beyond description."

When I reflected on my blind inference of criticism against the General, and his wife in her grave, I was willing to concede as much. However, I took refuge in saying nothing, waiting for my blunder to blow by.

After a moment, and as we walked in a wide grassy place side by side, Peg took up my hand. Finding the round, white mark where the wound of her leopard tooth had healed, she gazed on it a moment and sighed. Then, before I could stay her, she kissed it.

"Peg's mark!" she exclaimed, as though she conversed with her thoughts; "Peg's mark for her slave!" Then lifting up her eyes to mine: "I love that mark; so much of you I love." Then hiding a rogue of a smile which began to creep about the corners of her mouth, for she would be amused, it would seem, over the confusion into which her caress had thrown me—"Tell me, slave, do you not wish now it were a great hideous scar to overwhelm you?"

"And wherefore?" I asked. I could see how she meant to tease me with her mockeries, and would give her no answer to go upon. "I

regard that as a very excellent scar as it is," said I. "I would not have it larger for a good deal."

"Oh, believe me," cried Peg, her nose to the sky in a moment: "I would not make it larger for the world."

With that, and wearing a mighty air of insult, she went about swiftly, and never a syllable for good or ill could I bring from her until we reached her house. At the gate she paused and offered me her old, teasing look.

"Do you pray, watch-dog?" said she.

"I cannot make that boast," I replied.

"You should begin at once," she retorted. "You should pray for quickness and a little wit." Then, seeing me to rummage about in my thoughts for a clue to this: "But have no fear, watch-dog; I shall never let the General know how you condemned his wife."

This gave me ease again, for then I caught her meaning. However, I needed no such assurance, since I knew of none to own Peg's tact, or one less likely to go upon that error with the General she would pledge me her word to avoid.

The summer was running into autumn and the General no better. There had been good days and bad days, and for weeks on end we were made to swing between hope and fear like a

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

pendulum. And I believe he would have died, too, if it had not been for Peg to tend upon his pillow like a daughter. What a joy I had of the girl! My soul would fair reach out to take her in its arms for that tireless affection wherewith she surrounded him. While she could help, she was about him like an angel; when he turned his head for a little rest, she would be with me in her big chair by my desk.

And yet, when the days drew on themselves the coolness of October, and one should have looked for him to mend, the General fell suddenly away to the last flicker of his strength like a candle burning out. It was then the doctor gave him that warning how his time was near, and put us upon our guard to meet the worst. I may tell you my heart was as so much wood under my ribs, and gloom dwelt in the house like a ghost.

It will have somewhat a foolish sound, but, as I live by bread I think it was our Peg to save the General out from between the paws of death. Not by her care, though that was above description, but rather with a thought she one day laid upon him.

"Child, I shall surely die," the General was saying. "I have thought so more than once during my rough life; but this time is my first to really know. Now I see that I shall die."

Then he asked her to read a song from the hymn-book of his wife. "They are always an ease to me," he said.

Peg's eyes were running tears, and she had her work cut out to smother her sobs. For all that, she bore bravely up.

"You will not die," cried Peg. "And I shall read you, instead of hymns, how the Vice-President means to pull the country to pieces with his Charleston plots. Will you die and make him president in your stead—endow him with the power for his treasons?"

Peg told me how she had no design in saying this, and that Calhoun was in her mouth no more than an exclamation. And yet had it been the prescription of a whole college of doctors, it could not have exerted a wholesomer effect.

The General had told me he would die; and I had stood in daily terror of it; and yet neither had once fallen to consider—and this smacks of the foolish for both of us—how his death would raise up Calhoun to take his place. The truth is, I could never bring myself to plan or look beyond the General's death; my thought, however fear-spurred, would run no farther than just his death; there it would stop nor budge a pace beyond. The General's death would seem the end of things, as it might be a second deluge. And perhaps he, himself, fell

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

into similar frame; only with him it was but his building on that all-swallowing hope of meeting with his Saint Rachel, never again to be parted. That crowded out all else.

Letting conjecturings go adrift, however, the bald fact remains that it was Peg, after all, who came first to make us take a thought in advance and consider where the General's going would place the country with Calhoun. I remember how the General lay back on his pillow after Peg's outburst of warning; and next how his glance began to collect its old-time fire.

"By the Eternal!"—this in a whisper—"I will not die and leave the people helpless with those traitors. I must either live my term out, or live till I hang Calhoun. The country must be safe before I go."

From that moment he would not speak of dying, but only of getting well and living; and each day he made visible stages towards a better strength, and would sit up longer, and would demand that we do some work. I can not say I witnessed these efforts without trembling; he might break himself down to death's door with this sudden load of labor. But no, he would go on; and no harm to come of it, but only good, for within the four weeks to follow Peg's inspired exhortation—for I shall ever think of her as one inspired of heaven to

call the General back from death—he could be looked on as a hale man, one sound and in a plight of safety.

Also, his old fierceness began again to burn; he would bicker with me viciously—a thing laid aside for months. It comes back to me how, at the tail end of that sickness, his first words of opposition to something I proposed fell on my ears like a concord of sweet sounds. I could thank God in my heart to hear his anger, for now I knew he was surely upon health's own highroad. And so he was.

There came another thing of moment to find its cause in the General's illness, and that death it would threaten. The word had gone about the town that the General was in his last throes, or nearly; and at that, the thought giving a mean courage to the man, in the midst of this bad news our port wine Duff Green came upon us with a long editorial comparison of Calhoun with Van Buren, wherein the latter was lashed and the other uplifted to the blue dome. The article was nothing strong or well considered—a mere black thing of froth and poison!—and served no purpose beyond marking Duff Green's friendship in one quarter and his enmity in another.

It was Peg, who had taken charge of our newspapers, to call our eyes to the business.

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

Peg's indignation ran high, for she was a tireless adherent of her "good little secretary," who would be her ally against Mrs. Calhoun.

"Listen to this wretch!" cried Peg, as with the paper in her little claw she burst upon the General and me.

Thereupon she gave us the English of it, and being strung with anger, flourished it off with much spirit and effect.

While the General bent quiet ear, his brow lowered and his own anger began to run with Peg's.

"The scoundrel speaks of Van Buren," said the General, when Peg was done; "but he means me. And so he applauds Calhoun! Then let him follow his applause for his support." Then, to me directly: "Did you not in the beginning speak of calling Blair to found a paper? Write to him; bid him come at once. This Duff Green has done enough for punishment, and we will go about his destinies in ways not soon to be forgot."

Within the hour, a word was on the road to Blair in Frankfort; a word to become at once the death-warrant of Duff Green's *Telegraph* and the reason of Blair's *Globe*, which last, as the General once said, grew up in a

night like any Jonah's gourd, to cast a long, important shadow in affairs.

Duff Green, as if to observe the effect of his Calhoun-Van Buren shot, would call upon the General. It was my guardian Jim who told me of that visit.

"I was sort o' knockin' 'round," said Jim, "like a blind dog in a meat shop, when dish yere Duff Green gentleman tells me to give you 'Howdy!' an' say he's waitin' to see you-all."

"Where is he?" I asked.

"He's pervadin' about d'big Eas' Room," returned Jim, "when I 'bandons him."

Duff Green extended his fishy hand; but I did not see it, my eyes being employed upon his face; and that with so cold an industry it served to turn the violin red of it to apoplectic purple for uneasiness and rage.

"I offer you my hand, sir," cried Duff.

"Sir," said I, "in requital, I offer you a sentence of counsel. Be out of that door, and do not enter it again until your friend Calhoun is master in this house. But stay; I have another order for your ear. Do not, by word or look or act, whether to me or to any man, make claim on my acquaintance. I will not agree as to the measure of my resentment in case you do."

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

"Sir, is this an insult?"

"Sir, you will please yourself for a term."

"And, sir,"—Duff Green's voice quavered a trifle—"am I to consider this the action of the president?"

"I think it would be wise to do so," I retorted, "since you would seem to stand even lower in his graces than you do in mine. I argue this from a comparison of our remarks upon you." I was enough the savage to delight in harassing the pussy Duff and in diminishing his brow of consequence. "I did but casually describe you—being idle at the time—as a bloated spider, sucking patronage, and with a newspaper to be your web, when he would correct me. 'You do the dog a compliment,' said he. 'Now, one might conceive of a spider that should be of some moment. He whom we call Duff Green is no such thing. He is nothing; or at most a vacuum, which is nothingness given a name—as it were, an imponderous absence of overpowering unimportance.'"

"Them's mighty fine words, Marse Major, you-all flings loose," said Jim, when Duff Green quit the field. Jim, whose care concerning me was only equaled by his curiosity, stood, of course, in close attendance upon the colloquy. "Yas-sir," he continued, "them's

what Jim calls langwidge of d'good ol' Cumberland kind. That Duff Green gentleman shore misses it a mile when he comes pawin' 'round for to 'spute with you. Yes, indeed, Marse Major, that's whar he drap his water-million!"

When I repeated my interview with Duff to the General, together with Jim's comments of admiration, and we had had our laugh, the General turned serious:

"Major," said he, "I've been thinking. I may yet die, and the rule we made that no one of my cabinet shall succeed me when my term is done turns now to be no good rule. It strengthens Calhoun. Also, it is he to set his dog of a Duff against Van Buren because the latter would buckler Peg. I'm too much broken and too weak for talk, and I need not repeat the reasons for such step. It's on my heart, however, to set the ball in motion for Van Buren to have this place when my term is done."

"And how would you proceed?" said I. "For myself, nothing could be better to my taste."

"This is my notion," said the General. "Let us write to Overton, setting forth—with a cloud of other matter to be a cover—the presidential fitness of Van Buren in his every

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

line. This shall be a secret between Overton and us. The letter will be wanted only in event of my death, for while I live Calhoun shall never have the White House. If I die, why there's my name to it for Van Buren against the world. And let me tell you, sir, I much mistake my place with the people if my dead word be not of greater weight with them, ay! if it do not move them far beyond any potency to be latent in the living name Calhoun."

We made no pause about it, the General and I, and as soon as saddle-bags might carry, Overton received the missive which the General had described. It was never wanted, for the General did not die; but there it lay in the hands of Overton, and the word-for-word blood brother to it in my own, ready like a grim reserve to take his place in battle against Calhoun should the General be stricken down.

And thus, during our first summer and autumn, did the General and I, with caution and wise concern, coil down and clear our political decks for the great wars we knew were at hand. Defeat for our enemies; triumph for our friends; those were our watchwords.

You may believe I went into November and looked winterward with a load off my soul, when now the General's health was come back; and

with it his temper to wrangle and clash with me; also his mighty heart was restored, hot as Hecla and as volcanic, against those who, mongering Nullification, would forge a Calhoun treason down among the rice fields.

As for Peg, there stood no limit to her satisfaction when the fight for the General's life was won, and he in fairer health than at any hour since we came.

"And, child, it was you who saved me," said the General, lifting up Peg's chin with his thin hand. "Do you think I shall forget that?"

Now the town began to regain its own, and folk came straggling in from beach and hill and dale. Noah, too, was down from New York, he and his graceful Hercules, Rivera; and, as the town filled, Peg's spirits would put on spurs, and she never was more blithe and high than now when we drew close to that struggle of the drawing rooms wherein she so planned to have a leading portion.

One day, however, she would seem not quite so gay as common, but with a haze of thought about those eyes, which of late—with the General strong and above the need of drugs—had danced and sparkled. Peg had brought me a posy of flowers for my desk.

"Are they not beautiful?" she asked. "I

THE GENERAL SELECTS HIS SUCCESSOR

love the flowers; so sweet, so contented on their stems among the leaves! Are they not beautiful?"

"And how will I see flowers while you are in the place?" said I.

This was to cure her out of her sadness, which, for all her words about the flowers, hung over her face like a mist.

"Now, see how well you said that!" cried Peg, brightening a little and turning me her droll look. "Was it prepared? Was it spontaneous? Really, slave, were you to go on like that for a year, or say for two, my hope might revive over you." This lightly, and to step off her tongue with foot of air. Then, for my bewilderment beyond hope, she without warning breaks into tears. And next, to be a cap-sheaf on my shocked amazement, she gives me this at the door, to which she cries her way blindly: "My husband will be home to-night!" And with that she leaves me helplessly to wonder was there ever born upon this earth, to be a beautiful woman and turn folk mad, such another confusing tangle as this Peg of ours!

CHAPTER X

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CRO

Next morning I went straight into of my correspondence and began to use my pen as husbandmen toss hay. There was no unusual call for this energy of ink. The whole truth was that, flying like a fury, before pursuing thoughts of Peg—I may say they had a fine dance about my pen the night before!—I would make a refusal to work.

Long ago I had given up the idea of solving Peg in her vagaries. One would not know where or when or how to lay hold of her for she came to one new and new end. Wayward, erratic, now fierce and now gentle, now in laughter and now in tears, one could not count on her moods in their direction more than on the flight of birds. The only thing one might be sure of concerning her was that one was sure of nothing.

It was the thought of those tears and the home-coming of Eaton which would st

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

down and have me captive for all I might barricade with pen and ink. What should they proclaim? That Peg was unhappy, truly, since folk do not weep for mirth. In a way I was daunted of my honor as I went about these thoughts; it seemed a trustless thing to dwell on Peg and her wedded life. And I would fight against it; and still it pinned and held me. In the last of it I was claimed by the conclusion that Peg found existence grievously dark, for what else should be headwaters for those tears? Also, I resolved that I would coldly look the question of her grief in the face; it might turn the better for both of us to lay hands upon its cause. I was given the more courage for this scrutiny since I had not forgotten how Peg named me to be her only confidant; that word put a trust upon me and made my question-asking a kind of duty.

As thread by thread I lifted up the inquiry of Peg's sorrow, the truth would begin to make itself plain to me. Eaton was something gross, and mayhap in his finer senses not unnumbed of the bowl. He could not value Peg—she, a perfumed spirit thing of music and color and fire and light! And Peg would feel his lack of appreciation; it would wring her heart, stab her like a dagger. Verily, I came by a great freshness when now I was on

the right scent of it. This, it was, to root of her meaning when she showed vine trailing its rich beauties along the instead of climbing, and said, "I am vine." The prone and earth-held Eaton offered her no trellis.

And so Peg mourned her lost love! And why should she not mourn thus swindled of a rightful destiny! Is a thing of beauty to deck a heaven? Here was she fated to be the jewel in the head of a toad! Why should her so rebuke? Born to be the reason of a and to feed on it as a flower feeds on the irony of accident had flung her in a chill corner of neglect. And her dying—starving away its life. Peg loved Eaton; the yoke galled her—yoke as it did to one who, while perhaps on affections, the integrity, the loyalty, on the low unelevation of the brute. . . that, Peg would stay behind when Eaton away and weep to see him coming.

While, with some fondness for the ment—since it would make for Peg's tion—I was moving to these conclusions abruptly over me how, during our first the parlors of the Indian Queen, Peg would seem to swim in love for Eaton

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

called her cry of pain when she feared he might be shamed for her, and how she said she would sooner die than that. Then, surely, Peg must have loved him; nor had he changed since then.

These memories were sent to baffle me; but with a second thought the fallacy of such deductions was laid bare. When, in the Indian Queen, Peg would weep for love of Eaton, she was but the bride of a month. She stood yet in the haze of the honeymoon, and had been given no frank outline of her mate. Then he seemed what he should be, not what he was, and Hope, not Truth, was painter to the picture.

Yes, it would walk before me right enough; Eaton had been a lover of gold to become a husband of brass. Peg was as much wasted on him as though one put a love verse from Herrick into the hands of a Seminole of the Everglades. In his arms she was an error—a solecism—a crime—as it might be, a lily on a muck-heap!

These thoughts so played the tyrant with me as to take the pen from between my fingers; I could do no work, but only sit and stare from the window while my mind ran away to Peg.

Then I resolved to call Peg over; she should adorn her throne at my desk's end; I would show her how, for all that cloudiness of sensibility on the part of another, there still lived one on whom her sweet fineness was not thrown away. I would dispatch her a note by Jim; I would crave her help for my mails. This should bring her, and be a fair excuse besides, since it was not the beginning of such requests. Peg had often aided me to get my letters off.

Note in hand and ready, I stepped to the rear of the mansion to summon Jim. I could hear his high, patronizing tones, evidently employed about the instruction of the cook. The two were close by a rear door that opened into the kitchen.

"Yassir," I heard Jim say, "they has black bass in d'Cumberland, shoals an' shoals of 'em. How much you reckon that one weigh?" Apparently they had a Potomac fish between them to be the basis of discussion. "How much that weigh? Five pounds? You hyar me, son, we uses that size fish for bait back in Tennessee. Do Jim ever catch a bigger one? Say; if Jim don't catch a bass in d'ol' Cumberland that's bigger than a cow, then Jim'll jine d'church! It was a heap excitin', cotchin' that fish. He grab d'hook; an' then he jes'

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

nacherally split up an' down d'river like ol' Satan was arter him for dinner; an' then he done dives. That's whar he leads d'wrong kyard; for he bump his nose, blim! on d'rock bottom; an' it hurt him so he jes' turn, an' next he comes lippin' up through d'top of d'water an' goes soarin' off up into d'air for fifty foot. That's when Jim sees how big he is. When he gets up into d'atmosphere, he sort o' shuck himse'f, same as you-all sees a hen waller in d'dust; an', son, you could hear his scales rattle like shakin' buckshot in a bottle! An' at d'same time, that bass lams loose a yell folk might nacherally hear a mile, an' which shorely sounds like d'squall of a soul in torment. You hyar Jim! that bass—"

At this, I broke in on the revelations of our black Munchausen with my demands. As he turned, I heard him call back:

"No, I don't get him; he done bruk d'hook."

Peg and I had been worthily busy with my letters for full ten minutes. She was, for her, very quiet, almost indeed to the line of a grave sadness, which after all should be the aftermath of those tears of the day before.

If Peg were wordless, I, on my side, sat equally without conversation. We made tongueless company; but for that very reason went

with all the more earnestness to the letters as though they were the seeds of this silence.

"Well?" said Peg, with a suddenness, her hands in her lap. I stared. "Well?" she repeated. Then, when I said nothing, she would elaborate a bit. "Well, watch-dog, what would you have? You know these letters were the merest pretext for me to come."

"Why, then," said I, made desperate because she snatched away my disguise, "why, then, I was in a fret to look on you."

"Was it that?"

"Sometimes I fear your husband does not wholly understand you." It took courage to go thus far; it marked a point mightily forward of any attained to in former talks.

Peg gave me one of those fathomless looks, narrowing her brow whimsically. My bluntness had not dashed her spirit, at any rate; indeed, it would seem to have raised it.

"You fear my husband does not understand me?" repeated Peg. Now she paused an endless while, her eyes reading mine like print. I could feel her searching me for my last promise of expression. "You fear my husband does not understand me. And is he to be the only one? Is it there the roll-call ends? If that were true, I might sustain myself." For all a shadowy, vague piquancy of brow, Peg got

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

this off wearily enough, and I still prisoner to her eyes. Now, after a moment, her vivacity would mount a little. "You are right," she went on, "I am not much understood." A smile peeped from the dimple in her cheek. "What would you think, watch-dog, were I to give thick folk lessons in myself—expound myself to dunces as your pedagogue gives lessons in a book?"

"The lessons you propose should be marvellously sweet," said I. Then, with some tincture of my better courage: "By my soul's hope! I should be sure to go to school for those lessons."

"Ah! do you challenge me?" cried Peg. Now it would be the old Peg. "From this hour you begin your studies. Life shall be a never-ending lesson, and Peg the lesson."

"And I a student most diligent."

Peg came and stood close against my shoulder where I sat at the desk. Her color and her brightness had returned to chase away the shadows. With her fingers she parted my hair where the frosts of two score years and four were beginning their blight. She made as though she considered these ravages of silver.

Finally, she spoke to me in a way tenderly good.

"Watch-dog, watch-dog, you have eyes in your head and none in your wits. You are a blind-wit, watch-dog, a blind-wit of no hope. And you would study Peg? Teach I never so lucidly, study thou never so long, yet **shouldst** thou never know Peg, but die in darkness of her." Peg said this with a kind of murmur of regret. Then, collecting direction: "How many times has Peg been with you? And yet you have never seen her—never once seen Peg. You do not see Peg now while she stands at your shoulder. You are a blind-wit."

♦ If I have not seen Peg," said I, "and if I do not now see Peg, then at the least **my eyes** have tasted visions above report."

"Now you speak well," quoth Peg, with an archness of pretended approval.

Here, surely, should be the old, true Peg. It was a delight to listen to the bantering yet soft tones of her, like walking in the May woods with their new green and the new blossoms painting the ground about one's feet.

"What have I seen, then?" I asked, going back a pace.

"What have you seen? A mirage, the mere mirage of Peg—her picture, sketched on the skies of your ideal." Then in a playful manner of correction, as when a girl refuses a compliment: "You have looked upward, watch-

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSESS

dog, when you should have looked down. And now for your first lesson. This is the text of it: Would you find a woman, keep your eyes on the ground."

For all Peg's humor of gaiety, I could tell how she was under greatest strain. Also, there ran an odd current of reproach throughout her words. It was as though she saw faults in me.

"And now," said I, seeking to focus complaint, "and now, what have I done or said to hurt?"

Peg drew away from my shoulder. I could not see her face, but I felt her spirit changing from cool to hot in the furnace of some thought. There was silence for a moment.

"What have you done to hurt?" cried Peg, suddenly, breaking into a wondrous wrath. "Oh, I could die with such a dullard! What have you done? What is this just-now complaint you conceive against my husband? He does not understand me, forsooth! You should consider yourself! What have you done to hurt? You place me too high! You put me out of reach! Oh, I know of no more dreadful fate than to be forever mistaken for an angel!" That last came like the cry of a heart in torture. The next moment Peg was gone and I left gasping.

Of what avail to think? As she had said, I was a blundering blind-wit, and, by me at least, Peg would not be made out. I had declared how Eaton owned a footless fancy which could not raise itself to realize a goddess. And now, in my own high superiority, I had come bravely off! I had been properly paid as one who is churl enough to give a woman a compliment at the expense of her husband. Was I to suppose my goddess would accept flattery at the cost of her self-respect? The goddess from her furious pedestal had denounced me as one who planned for her dishonor.

Congress was now come down upon us like a high wind. The town began to rub its eyes free of those cobwebs of vacation slumbers; the taverns took on a buzzing life, while the streets, lately so still and lonesome, showed thickly sown of folk going here and there, for this reason of legislation or that hunger of office, and with faces gay or sombre as success was given or denied.

Noah was one to be denied. He had come to town somewhat in advance of Congress. The General brought him quickly to the White House and made him unpack his budget of gossip. How was Burr? How was Swartout? How fared Hoyt? Thus ran off the General's curiosity.

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

"All well, all prosperous," responded Noah, "and the town itself growing up to weeds of riches. The New York cry is, Money! They revise your friend Crockett, and, for an aphorism, say, 'Be sure you're rich, then go ahead.'"

The General would have it that Noah must take an office—a collectorship or some such gear.

"The Senate would defeat my confirmation," said Noah; "first for that I'm a Jew; and next because of Catron."

"And even so," returned the General; "it is still worth while to discover who would do that."

Noah was right, and his name came up to be refused by one vote. Calhoun from his place as president of the Senate proved as flint against Noah, while his mouthpiece, Hayne, led the war on the floor. I have yet to look on more anger than was the General's when the news arrived.

"Heed it not," said Noah, snapping his fingers. "I have still my laughter, my newspaper, and my Spanish swords."

"But the insult of it!" cried the General.

"To the cynic," said Noah, lightly, "there can come no insult. Your philosopher who laughs is safe against such whimsies. I shall

long remain both fat of pride and fat of purse for all a Senate may do. You do not know me; I should have been a Diogenes and insulted Alexanders from my tub."

Calhoun and his coterie brought with them to town their great question of Nullification. They worked on it incessantly and made a deal of hubbub. Calhoun set forward his man, Hayne, to the exposition of this policy of national disintegration. Hayne was met in that debate and overthrown by the mighty Webster. The country echoed with the strife of these Titans.

For himself, the General followed the argument, North against South, word by word and step by step. He had the debate of each day written off, and Peg would come over and read it to him while he smoked and pondered and resolved.

About this time I must write down how I was made to feel rebuked and neglected. Following that unguided reference to her husband, Peg would seem to have deserted me. My eyes had little of her, and I heard her voice still less; for while she was often in to gossip with the General, or read those Senate speeches to him, she gave me only stray, cold glances and monosyllables. She came no more to my workshop; and day after day I sat alone

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

while melancholy crept upon me like mosses over stone. I was not so dense but I could tell how I had offended. Peg was proud; she resented my suggestion that Eaton lacked appreciation; that was why she flew upon me, beak and talon, and said it was I who lived in darkness of her. I had been the wiser had I forgotten those tears of hers so soon as they were dry, and withstood myself from meddling opinions concerning her lot in life. Peg's coldness was the proper retort for my impertinence, and I must bear it even while it broke my heart.

It would be the expected thing that I should turn cheerless and be cast down when now Peg left me with my thoughts alone. I had grown so used to her about me, and to hear the sweet laugh of her, that it was to miss something out of my life when she took herself away. And yet it would be egotism. Folk miss and for a while deplore what has become a piece of their days—even chains and dungeons, so I've heard. Nor is this due to any love save self-love. I have often considered, as folk shed tears on a grave, how they wept for themselves and not for him who slept at their feet. It was the merest selfishness of habit, this dejection because Peg would desert me. Her absence would become custom in time,

and then, should she return, that coming doubtless would irk me just as much.

For all my wisdom, however, when now my starved eyes came only by stray, sparse glimpses of Peg, as I beheld her now and again across in the President's Square; or when she went by my door on her visits to the General, my spirit fell to be jaded and vastly lowered.

Had I known my way to go about it, I would have sought Peg out and talked with her freely and in full of what had fallen to be our differences. I would have acknowledged my error. But I saw no open gate through which to come by such converse, and I feared with an attempt to plunge bad into worse.

Once, indeed, my resolve was half hatched to gain some plain speech of her. I lay in wait until, the day being fine, I had sight of her on a rustic seat over across in the square. She was wrapped in a fur of some sort—martin, I think—and, with this drawn high about the throat, it so framed her face as to make her beautiful to the verge of witchcraft.

Seeing how she was near a path, I lounged out of door, and crossing the road, would make as though to walk by her, casually, and for exercise and air. It was my plan to greet Peg, and next drift into word with her as in the old

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

time. The old time! It was not days away, and yet it seemed as distant as my cradle! I would drift into speech of her, I say, and trust to fortune and my wit to bring down the explanation I believed might solve a reconciliation for us. It was a stratagem sagacious enough, but Peg granted me no chance of its test.

Before I could get to Peg, indeed, before I journeyed half the distance, she arose, careless and contained, as though she had not observed me—albeit I am sure she had—and would be moving for her own gate. At this I half halted; and Peg, striking out into a rapid walk, was in a moment the other side of her door. A little later I saw her standing by a window.

With Peg's flight I was abashed; it was so sure she wished to dodge me. Then a kind of anger took me in hand and I started towards her house. I do not know what was my precise thought in this, or whether I would have gone forward to lift the great knocker on the panel. As it fell forth, however, Peg, on seeing me coming, whipped away from the window; with that my heart would turn all to water and I faced sadly about.

Being abroad in the streets, I now went on to walk, and to clear my bosom of that un-

happiness which lay so heavy on it. I walked on and on, with no clear purpose until the thing to strike my notice was how here before me sprawled that vine which, on a summer day, Peg characterized for its wanderings and said it was like her.

Why I should go seeking this vine is by no means plain; and yet I must have owned to some hope of its succor, since I stood long to consider it, and cast about with my eyes if, by any luck of nature, a stout true tree stood at hand which might be given it for support. There was none; the poor vine must live and die unwedded on the loveless ground.

Somehow it magnified my sorrow when I could learn no way to help Peg's vine. But so it abode; there it should lie until the end. And the vine would seem to realize this, too; for it looked desolate, with leaves frost-seared and discolored like perished hopes.

It can not be said that I was uplifted of my walk, and I returned home, if the fact must out, more unhappy than on any day since I last looked on the Cumberland. It is curious, also, that this woe of Peg's coldness towards me should precipitate itself in wrath upon the General. But thus it did; for that innocent soldier had but to breathe Peg's name as we sat with our pipes that night, and all in a setting of con-

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

versation most commonplace, when I was upon him like a panther, snarling demands and clawing for replies, as to how much more time he expected me to steal from my plantations to waste upon him and his affairs.

To give credit where credit is due, the General kept himself quite steady under this unexpected fire, and refilled his pipe in confident, unshaken peace.

"My explosive friend," said the General, "I need make no better answer than just to turn your question on yourself. You know full well you would no more leave me than I would leave you. Those growls you give us arise from a dyspepsia of the imagination. You'll be as right as gold after a night's sleep."

It was upon me a bit later, as I sat trying to do some letters, that one secret of my gloom reposed in Peg's great chair, spreading its empty arms to my eyes each time I raised them from the page. It was that mocking empty chair to stare my heart out of countenance and give accent to its dreary emptiness.

On the impulse, I swooped as on an enemy and bore it to another room. Then I felt better; and indeed it was a relief not to be longer taunted of that chair, which would exult in be-

ing vacant and find a triumph by flinging at me the absence of my Peg.

Now the General, while commonly as frank for talk as a cataract, could be, when he preferred, as inscrutable as the tomb. It pleased him to lock up his tongue over Nullification; and while I understood his pose, and both Peg and Noah had heard him tell his thought on that pregnant topic of state, together with his feeling for Calhoun, folk for a widest part remained much in the dark. And it was often put and never answered, this query of what the General's course would be when the last grapple came to hand. The agitators for Secession were no folk to put to sea wanting chart, however crude, to display the shores and waters about them. They resolved to arrive by some knowledge of the General's temper on this dogma of danger so near the Calhoun heart.

In quest of such news, a spy, or perhaps he should be called a scout—the title is the more honorable—was dispatched to find and mark the General's position. The General and I were given a foreword by Noah of our gentleman who would be thus upon a reconnoiter. He came in sight one day, and fell upon our flank in this fashion.

It was an afternoon, crisp and clear; al-

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

together a day proper for middle autumn rather than the winter of any honest year. I had been out with Noah and was about my return. As I came up the walk, the General's ramrod form—tall hat, dark garb, swinging his tasseled walking-stick—emerged from the mansion's front door.

"Turn with me for a short jaunt," said he. "But first step down to the stables. I must have a look to my horses. That clumsy rascal, Charlie, let them run away, and aside from a strain to the horses and a hand's breadth of hide knocked off the nigh one's shoulder, he broke the wheel of the coach—my wife's coach, Major; I wouldn't have had it injured for a world of coaches."

This coach was one of the General's treasures. Well I recall how it was first brought up the Cumberland years before and rolled ashore at Nashville.

"But it's for her," observed the General, as I suggested the slimness of his purse in contrast with the cost of the vehicle; "it's for her. She shall have a proper carriage to ride in."

"I am more concerned for the coach," remarked the General, as we went about the western corner of the mansion on our way towards the stables, "then for the horses. If

she were here now, her whole tender thought would be of the latter."

The injuries to the carriage were not grievous, and a look of pleased relief filled the General's eyes. The horses, too, had come well through their unauthorized dash along the road, and a hostler, skillful of horse-drugs, gave his word to cure them of every ill received with a quart of wormwood and vinegar, and a spoonful of tar for the cuts.

"Beauties, eh?" said the General, as he admired the sleek gray-dappled coats with hand and eye. "Beauties, they are indeed! And descended in direct line from my great horse Truxton. You remember Truxton; that never-beaten King of the Clover Bottom Course?"

Truxton would be recalled easily enough. The more, since it was that fleet champion's match with the renowned Ploughboy which in part opened way to the savage duel with Dickenson.

Made sure of the safety of his carriage, the General and I turned westward for a stroll. When we were gone no desperate distance, I was all of a sudden shouted after in high-pitched tones, though amiable. We faced about to settle the riddle of the interruption. The calls were from one Rhetz, a member of

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

the Calhoun inner circle. Being of a friendly diplomacy, this Rhetz had maintained good relations with the General and myself.

"Ah! here we have our friend Rhetz," exclaimed the General. Rhetz was yet some distance. While we waited the General made his comment. "He is the one who should come from Calhoun; my silence on Nullification, as Noah warned us, has made the Vice-President nervous, and he would feel me out. I think, Major, and by your leave, I shall clear the business up for them. Come, now, what say you? Let us run up our Union flag like gallant, hearty fellows, you and me, and call on the fray. I think, too, I'll give them my views on Calhoun."

"Would it be wise to declare open war on Calhoun?"

"He has for long waged secret war on me," retorted the General. "No; let us unmask ourselves and thereby unmask him. It will cripple him and strengthen us, since the sole chance he has to harm me is to pretend to be my friend. Moreover, a fierce openness now should serve somewhat to hamstring the enemy's campaign against Peg."

"I was about to call on you," said Rhetz, greetings over "and was told at the door

how you were somewhere for a stroll about the grounds."

"What was your concern with me?" asked the General, his manner most urbane.

"No concern at all," responded the affable Rhetz, "no concern beyond a friendly regard, Mr. President. I would call only to exhibit my friendship."

"And that should give me great pleasure," said the General, casting a comic side-look towards me. Then, with a plain purpose of helping the scout to his discoveries: "And what of Congress? I suppose both House and Senate still heave with the ground-swells of the Webster-Hayne debate."

"There is no end of cloakroom talk," said Rhetz. "And, by the way, Mr. President,"—here was a feeler—"there be folk, and your friends at that, who wonder you are not openly with Calhoun and against Webster and his Yankees for this principle of States Rights." Rhetz followed this last observe with a setting forth of argument bearing for the Calhoun-Hayne contention.

"Beware of metaphysics," observed the General dryly, turning his gray look against Rhetz, as that rice-land sophist laid down one by one those various refinements and abstractions wherewith the Palmetto gentry—the Cal-

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

houns and the Butlers and the Pinckneys and the Haynes—were blazing the path for Secession; “beware of metaphysics! No good comes of splitting hairs. A rough-hewn honesty—a turgid frankness—should be the better road.” The General walked on in silence for a brief space, Rhetz also silent, feeling himself on the brink of some precipice of the General’s temper, and in no sort eager for a fall. “Sir,” resumed the General, “let me now set you an example; let me be most open with you, **not only** for Nullification, but for your friend, **Calhoun**. First, then, Calhoun is not trustworthy. Did he not for years teach me to believe he was my friend with Monroe, when it was he of all that cabinet who urged my court-martial for taking Florida and hanging Ambristie and Arbuthnot? Calhoun was my enemy, sir; he is my enemy now. He would hide the fact, but it is too late. When I tell you how Calhoun is my enemy, would you still urge on me this prince of duplicity for a statesman whose word is worth a following? Calhoun, for a plan or a principle, can not be relied on. He is congenitally bad, and will propose nothing that is true or high.” Here, as the General’s anger began to tower, he would strike viciously at old weeds, dead and winter-bitten, which ranked the path we traversed, cutting them down with his hick-

ory stick as with a saber; Rhetz still silent, without voice. "There lives but one more trustless than Calhoun—that arch-rogué Clay. And my friends would show amazement at my failure to be openly with Calhoun! Also, you say they fear I may follow Webster and his Yankees. Sir, I know the Yankees; they are a dour, hard brood, who to aid their interests might not scruple to over-reach. I have yet to hear, however, they betray their friends, as **did** Calhoun; I have still to know they would **bargain** the downfall of their party, as **did** Clay. Judas would have done a no more ebon deed than did that Kentucky renegade when he sold his soul to Adams for a place. And now am I to take a great doctrine from such children of deceit? Webster and his Yankees may be centered on themselves and selfish; doubtless they are. But you may tell Calhoun that I prefer them as companions of policy before such cozeners as himself and Clay." The General's voice here rose like the far high scream of an osprey.

"Calm yourself, General," I said, in tones which never failed to bring him to himself. "There is scant need of informing all Washington City of our opinions."

The General had paused in his walk and taken off that high white hat, deep girdled of

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

a mourning-band. As he talked he beat this stiff headgear with his cane until I quite trembled for its integrity.

"Calhoun," went on the General, but with temper more in hand, "claims for his state the right to annul the law—the right to secede from the Union. Sir, if we were to walk by this doctrine of Nullification, the Union would be like a bag open at both ends. No matter where or how you picked it up the meal would all run out. Tell Calhoun that I shall tie the bag and save the country."

The General's lean jaws at this last mention of Calhoun closed hard and iron-fast like a trap, while his nose seemed more beaky and predatory. Evidently he half scented Calhoun as a prey to come, and would be ready to swoop on him.

"You would seem deeply to hate both Clay and Calhoun, Mr. President," Rhetz suggested. Rhetz was somewhat feeble of voice; the General's outburst had taken his breath.

"And it is they rather than their doctrines I loathe," said the General. "They creep and crawl and sprawl in ambush, and strike at midnight. They pretend friendship while plotting one's destruction. I was born to make war upon their tribe—war to the death."

Rhetz made no protracted stay in such

warm company. We did not hinder his escape, and presently had the advantage of his back.

"I should like to see the Calhoun face," said I, "when Rhetz lays out his discoveries."

"You observe how they try me," cried the General, passionately, gazing after the disappearing Rhetz. "You will witness it! But by the heavens above us! I'll uphold the law!"

"And now," continued the General, when Rhetz was quite gone away, "having been so vigorously free with the envoy, I must at once write Calhoun a letter and say it all over again. I would have talked this to Calhoun first of all, were I accurately the gentleman of honor; but then he should not have stirred me with his spy."

The General's letter declaratory of the duplicity of Calhoun was written and went to the Vice-President the next day. It repeated his words to Rhetz so far as they were personal to Calhoun, and made a deal of commotion, I warrant you. The missive exploded in the very heart of Secession like a hand-grenade.

The General and I had turned now; we aimed to be home before dark, and your mid-winter day is not the longest of the year. The sun was still an hour over the western trees, however, when we found ourselves in the President's Square. Supper would only come with

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSESS

sundown, since we still adhered to our Tennessee customs.

Having moments to spare, we rested ourselves upon a bench which owned a thick pine tree at its back. I was the more willing, for we were in close view from Peg's windows, and I half hoped the sight of the General would lure her out to us. I was pining for a look into her face, and to hear the voice of her, sweet as the full note of a harp.

"Do you know," remarked my companion, "I never walk in this square but I think on the day when the British burned the White House. They halted in this very park and told off the squad of incendiaries and sent them across. Mrs. Madison was about to give a dinner, and was fair driven from the table by the bayonets of the English. I would I'd been here," he concluded; "I'd have made it for those visitors another New Orleans. The lady should have had her dinner if I'd been here."

"The English are good soldiers," I urged, paying little heed to him, for my eyes were roving after some flutter of Peg's skirts.

"They are marvellously puissant," he retorted, "when they number two for one of the enemy." The General's antipathy for the English was so great he could never do them justice. "I carry some record of their gallantry

myself," he continued, as he took off his hat and parted the bristling hair where the rough welt of a saber-slash proved a refusal to blacken English boots in the storm-torn years of the Revolution, when the General was a boy of twelve. "That fixed my opinion of the English," he said, as he replaced his hat. "And can you believe it, that scar burned like fire the day at New Orleans. Also, it has felt better ever since."

"Say what you will of the British," I insisted—I was turned obstinate now, seeing no sign of Peg—"they make stubborn soldiers. Note what they did with Napoleon."

"It was not the English," responded the General, with heat, "who defeated Napoleon; it was Paris. He should have done with Paris what the Russian did with Moscow—burned it, sir; burned it to the ground, and thrown himself for his support upon the country. So I should have done, and my country would have sustained me."

The General had been a partisan of the Corsican a score of years before; in the energy of his present defence, he arose from the seat and started again for home. I more slowly followed, still hoping the possible appearance of Peg.

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

As the General rounded a clump of bushes set near the path, he paused abruptly.

"What's this!" he exclaimed. The look of defiance for everything English, which still made hard his face, changed to one of tenderness and regard. "What's this!" he repeated.

There lay a little negro child, well coated and warm, sound and fast asleep for all the frost. The General thought no more on Napoleon, the English, the treachery of Paris, or the disaster of Waterloo. He stooped and gathered up the sleeping pickaninny in his arms.

"He is Augustus' little boy," he said. "He has tired himself with play. Augustus should have better watch of the child such weather as this. I'll put a flea in his careless ear to that effect."

Loaded with the small burden of the sleeping boy, the General led the way across the grounds.

Now when I had ceased to hope for her, a light foot on the sod told me how Peg was at hand. I verily believe the perverse witch to have been behind a tree, or hidden of a shrub, and not a score of yards from us during our whole halt in the square. I would have accosted her, but she brushed by with a curt bending of the head and not a word, and joined

the General where that chieftain marched ahead with the pickaninny. My heart sank, and I fell still farther to the rear, more lonely than before Peg came.

It was ten minutes later, and when Peg, leaving the General, was on the turn of setting forth for her own house. I was in my workshop, idle at my desk, thoughtful with no thoughts, and my heart inexpressibly sad.

As Peg would have crossed my door, her glance swept the interior of the room. With that, she came to a full stop. I looked up with an eagerness to hear her speak; and thinking, too, that now she would come in, and we two be the old kind friends again.

But instead of kindness, my glance gave me her face, cloudy and threatening. Also, there were lamps of danger lighted in her eyes. What new crime had I done? It was clear I stood guilty of some baseness; I read that much in Peg's frown, and the last poor spark of my hope pinched out. Never again, whatever the temptation, would I condemn a husband to his wife.

Peg swept into the room while I gazed on her without speaking. If for no reason save one of politeness, I should have greeted her; but my manners were quite driven out of my

THE MAJOR AND PEG AT CROSSES

head with wondering what new eggs would here be toasting on the spit for me.

"Where is my chair?" cried Peg, and with a voice as full of wrath as a coal of fire. Then pointing to where her leathern chair was not: "Where is my chair, I say?"

Stupidly, I looked over beyond my desk where her throne had been in happy times; but I kept my teeth on my tongue, not willing to have the risk of a word.

"I will have it back!" Peg went on, eye as vicious as a kestrel's, "I will have it instantly back!"

With every headlong dispatch I went after the chair, while Peg walked up and down as might that leopard who should own those two sharp teeth, the gleam of which just showed beneath the upper redness of her lip like points of pearl. When the chair was restored, I turned to her and called my courage to my shoulder.

"And now will you sit down?" said I.

"I will not sit there until I choose," stormed Peg, still up and down. Her cheek was flame, but with no laughing roguishness of fun; her eyes shone like mirrors, but not from any interest of amusement. As she went to and fro, leopard-like, she would have those eyes on me with a questioning indignation.

"So you would thrust my chair out of your room?" said she.

Then, as I made no words on it, Peg after a space would for the second time be about her departure, and I confess, for all my late thirst for her presence, not a trifle to my relief. A leopard—even a leopard named Peg—is no good company.

When Peg was by the door, she swung round on me. "I will not sit there until I choose," she cried again. "But you shall not touch my chair! I will not have it banished!" With this, she went quite away, while I stayed to look on the chair which had made the trouble, and now from its old place would leer victoriously upon me, and mock with a more insulting emptiness than ever, that doubly vacant heart of mine.

CHAPTER XI

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

In those few days next to follow Peg's tantrum of the chair, like those several to precede it, I was given no more than meager pictures of her. I should perhaps beg forgiveness for the name "tantrum," which is a byword or term of slang, but search as I may, I find nothing so good wherewith to tell the story of that rootless wrath of Peg's. However, I may say I was at care not to shift the chair again, but left it to stand waiting for her in accord with her command.

Peg, on the next day after that tantrum, and on every day, would come for her visit with the General; but each time she so crept by me, whether by stealth or luck, that I lost notice of her advent, and knew nothing of her presence until she went past my door when on her way for home. She would create noise enough with her flight; setting her small feet down in emphasis and sending a rustle along the hallway with the swirl of her petticoats, so that I had ample time to raise my head and be on guard

for her. She would nod slightly as she caught my glance, but ever sustained herself with that distance which she had seen fit to construct between us.

When Peg flashed by my door—for, radiant as ever, and with the motion of a meteor, “flashed” should be the description of it—I was bound to observe how her look shot straight for her chair like an arrow. She would be sure it was there, that chair; and I could tell how its absence would have become the signal for crowning me with so warm a version of her feelings that I shriveled like October leaves to simply think on it. But I would meet no risk of the sort, since I did not entertain the hardihood to invoke it.

I say the latter, because sooth it is, that half in anger, half in thought to bring her in for a talk, I once had it on my mind to send Peg’s chair again into exile. Indeed, I did put it out of the room. But only for a moment; the wick of my courage burned dim, and I fell to be in utmost haste to restore that leathern furnishment, breathing the while in a quick, craven fashion of respiration, lest she surprise me before the situation was repaired. Thus it stood; the chair and I in the room, and both desolate, with Peg going each day by like a

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

watchman on his rounds, to glance in and be assured.

These conditions of separation between Peg and myself, as days went on, would give me less and less of ease. I was forever carrying them on the ridge of my thought, and they made an unhappy element in life's skyline. I stood the more in grief, since to be out with little Peg was like a quarrel with a child; and then, moreover, the fault of it was mine, for I overstepped an obvious line of right conduct when I went forth upon Eaton's disparagement. It was a fool's work, besides; for I might have known she would be sharp to notice and as sharply bound to resent; had she not already warned me how I disfavored Eaton, and told me I was jealous? She would say, truly, she did not care for that jealousy; but that was mere laughter when her fancy was at merriest. Also, she had told how I did not know her, and never would see her true self; I began now to understand that she was right. And yet I would have her back, and our old frank confidence returned; for Peg, as I tell you, was only a child—a prankish girl when all was in, and it made no more for my credit than for my peace that we should be at crosses.

It stands a thing strangest of all, how differently one will regard another when the time

is this or that. Peg, as I have written, would seem ever to me the rompish child ; for my thoughts of her were forged and beaten out upon the stithy of those moments when, free and playful and without restraint, she sat alone with me. By the same token ! I recall another score of moments where the stage was a drawing room and strange folk framed the scene, and Peg, a beautiful woman of dignity and grave reserve, would remind one of no child at all. But then she would not be Peg to me ; on such times when this proud, sufficient being made me some sweeping, stately recognition, and as though I had known her but a day, I have stood aside to wonder was she that playful leopard Peg whose white mark I wore on my hand ? Was it she to call me " slave " and kiss the mark, or " watch-dog " and make me a collar with her arms ? And still I liked her thus. I was proud to see her proud ; and my bosom would swell to note how when Peg, fastidious, and with her highbred look, stepped across a room, she seemed among the women gathered there—and they the Vere de Veres—a greyhound among poodles, or rather the leopard she was among a troop of tabbies. These be crude comparisons, surely ; yet there comes no other to so fit with my thoughts of rearward days when Peg moved an empress in.

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

the midst of peasants, at once the envy and despair of rivalry.

As I tell you, for all these exhibitions of commanding womanhood, Peg would continue with me but a child; the image of such ball-room triumphs were not to remain with me, while the real Peg, the true Peg, the dear Peg of memory when alone, would ever be the laughing, mocking, hectoring, teasing Peg on her leathern throne at my desk's end. It is the same with men; there come such words as play and work, and danger and safety; and the man you saw on the battle-line, as stern and as brave as Cæsar, is that boy by yonder camp-fire who now laughs over some tale of personal chicken-pillage when he fled before a mad old dame armed of a pudding stick.

While Peg and I were on these long-range terms, I went more in hunt of the General for his company's sake and for conversation. I do not think the General stood aware of Peg's cold pose towards me, for, as I have urged, he was no one to see such things; besides, Peg, who showed herself no bad strategist, would be about me with the friendliness of those days that were, whenever the General sat by to make a third. Peg held the General in a best esteem; and then, too, she would be mindful how lately he was ill and save for her tending might have

died, and be the last to vex him with thoughts of how two so near him and dear upon his sentiment nourished a feud among themselves.

While the General missed the reason of my frequent visits, he no less relished our talks; for a president, let me inform you, is a mighty idle man, for all your sycophants and toadies of print would depict him as a galley slave who breaks his heart against an oar of duty. A president has little to do beyond fret and fume while affairs go crosswise to his wishes; also, the General would have him to be a most tied and helpless creature, besides.

"The presidency," he would say, "when one goes to a last experiment, is but another word for paralysis."

"And is a president such a thing without hands?" I would ask, for it was sure he thirsted to lecture.

"The office is so much bigger than the man," he would reply, "that it controls him, as a mountain might bear down the strongest were you to load his back with one."

"Now, I had thought a president to be of some consequence," I would retort, in a manner of vexing him. "At least I have known presidents to think so."

"And so thought I," he would respond, "ten months ago and before inauguration."

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

Sir, a president is but the fly on the chariot wheel. Being vain, the insect might flatter himself with a theory that he is the reason of that dust and motion he observes. But the insect's vanity would be none the less in error. I say to you, a presidency is a thing of bolts and bars and locks and fetters. What may a president do? He may say this man shall keep office and that man shall not, and that would be as important as if he said this rat shall go overboard and that rat stay to roam the ship. The vermin fate of these, for black or white, would neither affect a course nor pick those ports at which the vessel touched."

"But a president may veto a bill," I would reply, "or make it a law with his fist. He may bring down a war."

"And yet he is no free agent when he does any of these," he would return. "He is pressed upon by one force or another, or mayhap a dozen at once, and must go with conditions like a man in a landslide. As I say, the office is so much bigger than the man that it transacts the man, and not the man the office. It is as though one were made president of the Potomac, or of a glacier. Could he take the one beyond its banks with a war or stay the other in its progress with a veto? He might run up a flag, order a bugle blown, fire a

gun; but the river or the glacier would be the last impressed. No, sir; were one made chief magistrate of that snowstorm which now whitens the world outside, and set to rule its flakes, he would be in as much control as when given a White House and told that he is President."

Mayhap it will interest should I offer a report of one of our afternoons. It might go as specimen of all, for each was but a strolling here and there of talk. Our discourse would be hit or miss, like a rag carpet, and would fall foul of whatever caught the eye or stubbed the toe of fancy at the moment.

On this day, and being weary with the sight of Peg's empty chair, I went down the hall to the General's workroom and found him with his nose in *Tristram Shandy*.²

"Do you like your author?" said I.

"Why, sir," said the General, laying aside the book, "he is so grown up to sedge of phrase and choked of word-weeds as to deny one either the sight or the taste of the true stream of his story."

"Walpole," I returned, "said that reading *Tristram* was to laugh a moment and yawn an hour."

"Then he had the better of me, since I have done nothing but yawn." After a pause: "Peg gave me the book; it was my loyalty

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

to the child that sent me between its pages. And speaking of Peg: Do you still send her the roses? I know you do, for I met your Jim on his way to her, buried in blossoms and looking for all the world like the flower booth in a village fair." Here the General lazily reached for his pipe.

"And why should she not have the flowers?" I demanded, warmly.

"No reason under the sky, sir," said he, giving me that old glance out of the falcon eyes of him—to anger me, I suppose—"none under the sky! Send our pretty Peg the roof off the house should she have a mind for it." Then, when now his pipe was going: "Was it not you to recommend a round, squat, corpulent being named Curtis to be marshal for Tennessee?"

"I said he was a good man."

"One might say as much of a pan of dough. The creature is absolutely without motion; I tried him mentally and physically, so to speak; the man is stagnant."

"None the less a good man," I contended. "To do nothing is at least to do no harm."

"Now, that is as may be," retorted the General. "I will have nothing to do with your motionless folk. They are always the worst folk of all. I never have been in any crush of peril

or concern where action was not less hazardous than inaction, and to do the wrong thing far and away better than to do nothing at all. Now, this fellow Curtis of yours would not even talk. He had no more conversation than a catfish."

"Silence is caution," said I, dogmatically, also reaching down a pipe from the mantel to keep the General in smoky countenance; "silence is caution, and caution is ever a good thing."

"Caution is a braggart," returned the General, argumentatively, "to call itself a virtue when it is more often a cover for cowardice. Caution has lost more fights than rashness, you may take a soldier's word for that."

"That is in keeping with your other proverb, 'Never overrate a foe.' Those be the maxims to get folk killed!"

"And why not, so the folk be the enemy? I have beaten twice my strength because they overrated me."

"Still," said I, stubbornly, "the crime of silence which you charge upon this Curtis is no mighty delinquency. Words, as a rule, are a weakness; and I think Curtis should be marshal."

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

"Let him be marshal, then, and end it," returned the General; "but I may tell you, sir, that words are not a weakness, but a source of strength." The General was an indomitable conversationist, and would not be criticised. "The man who says the most, commonly knows the most, and comes most often to succeed. Silent folk win only by accident, as he shall see who retraces any of their victories to its birth."

"And now what nonsense!" cried I. "What wise one said 'Silence is golden!'?"

"Some wise one who wanted the floor for himself, doubtless," puffed the General. "Talk is a cloak, and great talk a great cloak to hide one's movements. It is a common fallacy to suppose that one who talks much—chatters, we will even call it—tells ever the truth. Now my experience goes for it that a great talker is misleading you nine-tenths of the time; heads one way while he talks another. I cannot be sure of the plans or aims of a great talker. He would seem to point so many ways at once. Your tongue-tied fellow I read easily. When I once know where he is, and then remember where he would be, I will readily foresee for you the trail he means to travel."

"Calhoun is a silent man."

"And Calhoun is a defeated man; his one chance is my death, which I have no mind shall

happen. Calhoun is a silent, but not a secret man. He hides nothing, and can hide nothing by a still tongue. Who does not know how he is for Nullification and must live or die by it?"

"And you," said I, "have decided it shall be the latter."

"If Calhoun had not assailed me, and, more, if he had not included Peg's destruction in his plans—as a soldier might burn a beautiful suburb for an element of his assault on a city—Calhoun and I would have come by some agreement. I like the man; but you see he has no gift to be popular. He makes war on me, which is the least popular thing he could do; and then, to prick me on for bitterest resolution and a strife to the death, he sets his dogs to baying Peg. Also, let us not forget how he would drag down Van Buren because he is Peg's friend and mine. Sir, you and I will one day make Van Buren president for that."

"And you have written Calhoun that letter to be notice of your hate."

"It ties him hand and foot," said the General. "Were Calhoun Samson, that letter shears his locks. He will publish it, and make every friend I have his enemy."

"And you are enough loved by the people

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

to make that a most formidable condition for Calhoun."

You are to observe that now when I would find the General idle and with an itch for talk, I trolled him along as folk troll pickerel. It relieved him to thus unbuckle; more, it helped him form his plans, for so he said himself.

"I am ten fold more loved than Calhoun," responded the General. "Calhoun, as I've said, has no gift to be popular. He talks *to* folk; I talk *with* them. Sir, between those words, *with* and *to*, dwells the whole art of popularity."

"Your popularity is growth of your work in the field."

"My being a soldier, had much to do with its beginning. Man is a fighting animal and loves a fighter. Particularly if he win. Now, were I to advise one to a short cut for public favor, I would say, 'Be a soldier and win.'"

"Especially 'win,'" I returned.

"By all means add the 'win' and emphasize it. That is my rede: Be sure to win. No one is made to explain a victory, no one tries a conqueror; the error of all errors is the black error of defeat."

"And yet a good man may lose."

"Sir, the best man may lose. But you are

to consider: When he loses, the public owes him nothing. A farmer toils like a slave; a drought kills his crops; is he paid for the corn he does not raise? The public owes the successful soldier for that profit it takes from his sword; and the public pays its debts. I won at the Horseshoe, at Pensacola, at New Orleans; and the public pays me with a White House. Had I lost my battles, I would have been cashiered a score of times. Calhoun would have succeeded with his scheme to court-martial me in the Seminole days, save that I was armored of my victories. I would never agree to less than victory, and that stubbornness for triumph has even defeated enemies I did not know I had."

"You have had vast success," said I, judgmatically. "when one remembers the blindness of your prejudices, and how you will help this one or hurt that one for a no better reason than love or hate. There is your defect; I have often wished that to your honesty and ardor you added the just fairness of Jefferson."

"Jefferson!" This with a snort: "I am a fairer—a more just man than was Jefferson! He was just to his enemies and unjust to his friends. Now, I am strong enough to do justice by a friend. It hurts no man with me

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

that he has been the friend of Andrew Jackson."

"But you can not do justice by a foe. You are all for a foe's destruction."

"I am all for a foe's defeat. And defeat of a foe is justice to a foe. 'Woe to the vanquished!' said Brennus, and the barbarian was right. Being in the field, your business is to conquer."

"You talk like a philosopher," said I, "but you never feel like one. Here: I will show you your prejudice in the face! Give me now your estimate of Clay—of Webster—of Hayne—of Calhoun—of Randolph!"

"You think my portraits will be red and black and flame-color." The General spoke cunningly. I saw how he had gone sentry over his feeling, and now I looked for a mild story of those whom I had named. "Webster, mentally, is strong," said he, "and willing, like a horse. But, like a horse, he can not harness himself to a load. There should be those about to hook the traces and in a measure guide him for his haulings. Compared with Hayne, whose mentality is slim and graceful as is an elm, Webster is the oak. He is bigger and stronger without being so beautiful. Besides, Hayne is indolent, and would sooner drift all day than pull an oar an hour. That is the reason why Calhoun, who has cur-

rents, sweeps Hayne along for Nullification. Calhoun is simply a good man gone wrong; and, for that he was bred narrowly and as an aristocrat, he loses time over his dignity. Also, he does not keep in touch with the detail of his destinies, but leaves too much to underlings. Thus he is put into the position of him who attacks a woman—an act without defence, and one most perilous; and, being in, Calhoun lacks that force needed for his extrication. Randolph is built like a spear, with his anger the head and his intelligence to be the shaft of it. He has no morality of thought, and his one virtue is his contempt for Clay. Randolph was born to be beaten, since he was born to make a science of hatred and become a specialist of reprisal. Clay is altogether another story. The man is mean beyond expression. He would be perilous, but he wants in courage. He has appetites but no principles; he can attain to a conclusion but not to a conviction. He owns no depth of mind; he is brilliant in a sheeny, shimmery way, and, being of no integrity, is no more to be laid hold on, mind you! and held to anything, than so much water."

"And would you say," cried I, "that Clay has no convictions?"

"No more than has a mirror! Sir, the

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

man will acquiesce, and show you whatever is set before him like a looking-glass. There is his conviction for you ! It is each time some other man's conviction and wholly outside of Clay. Remove it from before him ; look then into your burnished statesman, and where is his conviction ? Why, sir, when Clay sold himself to Adams, did it not prove what I say ?”

The General reeled off these views with, for him, a mighty conservatism that was a surprise to me ; for knowing his headlong, not to say trenchant, sort, I looked to have him go about his carvings of the portaits of ones inimical to him with a knife. He would have obliged me, too ; but he observed my thought, and turned cautious to disappoint me. I must concede, he weighed up these gentry fairly well—he squarely hit them off or I'm the more mistaken. He was too lenient with Calhoun ; Calhoun might have called off those slanders against Peg which found voice for his advancement ; when he failed of that he became their sponsor.

When I went again to my own lair of labor, I found Noah waiting. I had grown to delight in our cool gentleman of the red hair, the jet eyes, and the sharp Spanish swords.

“And now,” said I, and greeting my visitor, “how runs the world away ?”

"There are things talked about our taverns," said Noah, "and the corridors of Congress, whereof it might be proper the President should hear. The more, since the conversations have him for their motive."

"Let us journey down the hall and tell him," said I.

"No," returned Noah; "you may enlighten him later, since there comes no call for hurry. I dislike to dodge in and out or play hide and seek with a president; it is not seemly. And the fact that our friend would tolerate, and might even encourage the familiarity on my personal part, offer best reasons why I should avoid it."

"You make yourself too modest," said I.

None the less I was touched to admiration with this decent sense of the proprieties on Noah's part. It stood a pity it found imitation by so few.

"What is it to be, then?" I asked.

"You need not be told," said Noah, "how the President's note to the Vice-President, added to Rhetz's report of the White House views on Nullification, Secession, and kindred hangman topics, has made a flutter. Your Palmetto folk who plot for Nullification fear the President. Being so far right, they then step aside for error; they fall to fond imaginings

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

that, for all his violence of phrase to Rhetz, the President, in return, fears them. They believe, were he to count their power, he would not dare them to any last-ditch opposition. Then, too, the leaders are not wholly satisfied with the Rhetz returns. Thus a situation is framed where some stronger light on the President's intentions, together with the true news of those lengths to which he stands ready to go, and whether an ultimate resort would call for rifles and then the gallows, is deeply to be desired. And these tavern conversations and talks of the corridors have for their object the President's development along the lines exhibited."

"And this is highly the natural thing," said I. "Have our anxious ones invented any trap wherewith to catch that word they seek?"

"They will search for it in this wise," said Noah; "thus canters the plan: They look to a day far ahead, but it will be with them in time. They have settled on Jefferson's birthday to make a test of the President and discover what he would do should South Carolina, with Calhoun, abrogate a tariff and defy government in the port of Charleston. The occasion will be in honor of the Man of Monticello. Jefferson's memory and its graceful illustration will serve as the cause, ostensible, of that banquet; really, the affair is to be twisted for Nullification.

There will come a score of toasts; and each to exalt the state at the cost of the nation, and argue treason holy. The speeches will follow of a piece with the toasts. Calhoun and his cohorts will crowd the tables; applause will be extant for every sentiment of disunion; in short, they devise a States Rights gathering where Nullification and the rebellious spawn of it shall gain a broad endorsement."

"And where does the General come into their machinations?"

"The President will be invited to attend. Should he come, he will be given the Chair's right hand. The Calhoun folk will read his face while their toasts of treason are flaunted. They will ask him for a sentiment. They believe that his courses to come, as he designs them, can not fail to find disclosure. They hope to gain the measure of his apprehensions. When they once have the pattern of the President's hopes and fears, and learn his timid limits, they think those boundaries of safety beyond which Nullification must not push will be determined."

"Now, if these schemers," I cried, "own no capital save the General's timidity, they are indeed in bankrupt case."

"They build on sand," said Noah. "But that fact of sand is precisely what they do not

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

know. However, the President may teach them with what light he sees fit. Should he decide to prolong their night of doubt, he has but to stay away."

"And how would our black gentry construe his absence?"

"Assuredly they would incline to believe he was afraid."

"Why, then," cried I, "it might be difficult to say that the General will or will not attend a gathering of treason scheduled more than three months away. There is this to be recalled, however; the General has done few things because he was afraid."

"But it is well," returned Noah, "to have the President aware of what is in store. He will own the larger space for preparation. The gathering will continue a sort of secret for six weeks to come; nor is the traitor color thereof to be shown until a glass-and-bottle stage. When courage is high and caution fled, rebellion will be unpacked. You observe how surprise is arranged for. There will be hawks'-eyes to catch the trend of presidential thought concerning it. There lies open the whole plot for you."

"And many thanks," said I. "Your warning, as you remark, has the mighty merit of being early. Rest secure the General will profit

by it; he may even contrive some counter reason for amazement that shall become to our folk of Secession the very mother of dismay."

When, now, Noah was about to go, he came back from the door with a new thought.

"This on Rivera's word," said he. "The boy, however, is to be trusted when he tells merely what he sees and hears, and is not asked to think. There would seem to be a rough Maryland brood to hang about the tap-rooms—as many as ten, all told. They belong, so to say it, with that Catron whom we think of now and then for the pleasure he gave us at Gadsby's. Catron, somewhat the worse of his sword-arm, is also in town. These ruffians use your name and mine, and never in a way of praise. Should you go about the roads of nights, carry an ear for ones to come up behind. Also, walk warily where corners are dark."

"And you?" said I, laughing at the comic twist with which Noah ornamented his counsel; "and you? Have you gone upon precautions?"

"No more than you see," said Noah, bringing to light a knife of peculiar make. "I have no great burden of respect for just one man, however urgent his irritation or its reason. But a horde, and the members to be of

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

midnight, hangdog sort, arouses the latent prudence of my race, and I comfort my nervousness with toys like this." Here the queer knife made a flourish.

I took the weapon from his hand. It was one of those new knives called a bowie, and the first in my fingers. There was a buckhorn haft, and the 9-inch blade showed thick at the back with plenty of steel. This gave it weight, and it balanced in one's hand like a hatchet, and all sanguine and hopeful to the feel.

"It is a Maryland conception," said Noah, "and therefore a most fitting rebuke to what thugs shall come out of that commonwealth on a mission for one's disaster." Then, reclaiming the bowie: "The courage of a race appears in the length of its weapons. The shorter the weapon the harder the strain. Now, whoever devised that knife had a Norse heart in him; his instinct was to go close in to his enemy, and come back covered with blood."

"And do you believe," said I, "those fellows of whom Rivera tells were brought here by that Catron to work a revenge for him?"

"They are here by favor of his money, truly," responded Noah, "as Rivera overheard them say. And for that revenge you speak of, it will be long ere Catron works one for himself in person, since his arm has turned

dead in deference to my rapier. He could not so much as point a pistol with it."

These words of Catron and his ruffians did not dwell with me seriously; they were the sooner thrust out of mind because the General, not a moment behind Noah's going, came into my room. On hearing of the latter's visit, he was active at first to call him back. But on another thought, he gave that up; full of a new notion of concern to Peg, he would have my view of it.

"Now I have a decided humor," observed the General, throwing himself into Peg's chair—which was consistent enough since he came upon Peg's good—"I have grown to a decided humor that Peg shall rout these carpet Redsticks who would conspire for her defeat. The more, perhaps, since the chief—if that be fit title for a lady—is wife of our Vice-President, and moving, as she sees it, for his interest of politics against me. Peg must and shall triumph; to lose—aside from what we might personally feel—would spell nothing short of her destruction. And a war, mark you, which combed a country of its last of life, would mean no more for any individual."

"Why then," I said, "you can not be more deeply set on Peg's success than I."

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

"Of a truth, no!" retorted the General, with his shrewd grin; "do not imagine I had a doubt of it. But here is what I have been turning in my head for a question. The White House, socially, they tell me, is of immense consequence. Now, I have decided to endow Peg with this coign of vantage to be an aid for her plans. For myself, I shall follow Peg's flag; I shall implicitly take her commands. She shall hold the White House for her reserve; or have it on either wing; or she may head a charge with it."

"And do you think to surprise me with this?" I returned. "I knew how you would thus conduct yourself from the beginning."

"I am glad to have been so flattered in your thoughts," said the General, dryly. "I may take it you forestalled my action by considering what should be your own. However, now that we are come by these sage decisions to put Peg in control of us, I hold it excellent to have her over and learn her views. Perchance, after all, she may mislike us—these, her volunteers—and give us our dismissals."

"Shall I send word for her?" I asked. Mighty ready was I for any reason that should bring Peg walking our way.

"It is what I would propose,"
 "The sooner Peg knows of these, he
 the sooner she can sketch her line
 Send your Jim ; he has doubtless le
 way to Peg's on those rose errands."

The General's humor would co
 of being overtaxed with a too much
 for those roses to Peg. Some day I n
 him to observe as much, and to see
 reason for his jesting. There is suc
 as threadbare, but in conjunction with
 sendings to Peg, which—and prope
 went on, and his endless references th
 the General would appear to live in ig
 of it. However, I did not proceed fo
 lightenment at this time, but put it
 more sour leisure and a cloudier day.

Jim was sitting near a hall window,
 considering the snow through the pane
 tropic blood would shrink from winter
 though in sympathy with what were i
 his feelings, he crooned in a most disn

"Rain come wet me, sun come dry
 Take keer, white man, don't come r
 me."

"Is that another of those inspira
 Polly Hines of the 'Possum Trot?" I :

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

"Why, no, Marse Major," said Jim, "It's a good ol' Cumberland ditty jes' d'same. Jim sings 'em when he's thinkin' of d'folks in Tennessee. It sort o' he'ps Jim to see 'em. Thar's times when, if Jim sings long enough, d'folks back thar nacherally seems to rise right up befo' Jim."

"Those are surely advantages," said I, "and if I thought it might bring me such fortune, I would strike up a tune for myself. Since you appear to be in touch with them, tell me what is going on among our people at home."

Jim, with his own color and on a capital made up of a dried snake's head, the smoke-cured cud of a cow, and the several feet of a rabbit—"a graveyard rabbit, cotched in d'dark of d'moon," was Jim's description—set up, you should understand, for a seer. In a compliant spirit of fun, I was wont to countenance Jim in these weird assumptions.

"Tell me what they do in Tennessee," I repeated.

"Jim's afeerd to try, Marse Major," said Jim, shaking his head as one who distrusts his powers. "You-all can see yourse'f, that camped yere as we-all be, millions an' millions of miles away, tellin' what goes on in Tennessee aint easy. Under d'most fav'ble conditions. it's what Jim would call a long shot an' a limb in

d'way. An' you hyar Jim! thar aint been no fav'ble conditions cirklin' round him since ever you turns d'key on that demijohn. Jim aint got over thinkin' you-all acts plumb hasty about that demijohn, Marse Major."

"Well, perhaps I did," said I, "and so far as a dollar will go"—here I tossed Jim a Mexican—"towards repairing the injury, I am ready to make amends. Meanwhile you are to take this note where you take the flowers."

Jim's confidence in Peg had long ago been established, and he was no more ploughed of those fears which arose to furrow him during our earlier days at the Indian Queen. He promptly took my note—one which employed the General's name—and with it the Mexican coin, and went about his errand.

"It's monstrous remark'ble, Marse Major," said Jim, as he pocketed the silver, "how money does 'liven an' limber a man up. Now that dollar shore makes Jim feel as spry as a gray squirrel; it mos' certainly do!"

I was not without my alarms for Peg's coming; but when she tripped in upon the General and myself, it was as balm to my bruised nature to feel on her part some quick leniency towards me, and a certain tacit sweetness—somewhat sorrowful, but none the less good—to which I had been alien since the day

laid those witless strictures upon Eaton for that he was conceived without a soul. This gentle attitude of Peg's came upon me like summer weather, touching everything with sunshine, and the hour took on a sudden pleasant hue. Peg could not fail to see the change; and even the General would be aware of that improvement.

"Now you must have brought June in your apron," said the General, playing with Peg. "In any event, you have thawed our frigid friend here. He has been frozen for days, and now you see his face glows like harvest-home."

"If that be true," laughed Peg—quite her old beautiful laugh, too, and not a laugh conceived solely for the General, but with a share for me—"if that be true, I must show more pains to come often, and not make my stay so short as has been my wont. I did not know that I was such a blessing."

The General would make Peg have her old chair by my desk, which showed me—and I pondered over it not a little—how he was observant beyond what I had supposed, to be thus sharp on that small point of where Peg should sit when in confab with me. When Peg was throned in her old place—and, to my eyes, she filled the room with a kind of glory—

the General drew up his own chair so as to put us three to be the corners of a triangle.

"We have brought you here," quoth the General, giving his face a droll expression by which one might tell him to be in a frame of amiable lightness, "we have brought you here, the good, thawed Major and I, to make a despot of you. We draw towards New Year's Day, when our society Redsticks will start upon the warpath. We desire to put ourselves and our White House, and all we have besides, in your hands. You have but to publish your orders, and lo! we carry them out. Being now set to rule over us, the Major—and I perceive with joy he is quite warmed through—would crave your commands for him. As for myself, you have had only to lift your finger to dispose of half my kingdom since ever that day when I lay dying and you revived me with the name of Calhoun."

When he said this, the General beamed on Peg in his tolerant, paternal fashion, while for my side I sat silent, yet the happiest one of all, since I was growing sure and more sure with every moment how my Peg of the old days had of a truth come back. I would not stop to query how or why; it was enough to have it so, and the music that went singing in my heart with this white surprise of joy was near

THE GENERAL MAKES PROVERBS

to betraying me into humming a tune—a burst of harmony, had I been weakly guilty of it, which the General would have made the material of his mirth for so long a term it would weary him who sought to measure it.

“And I am to order you and your White House up and down in my campaign?” cried Peg, sparkling forth.

“Have I not told you how you are to be a despot?”

“And I may have a dinner, a reception, or a dance, or what I will—the carpets up in the East Room, if I choose?”

“Your word shall be as Aladdin magic among us, your very hint a law.”

“Well, then,” cried Peg, whose smile was a bright comrade for the General’s, “well, then, now that I am clothed of this high estate, I must not begin by being rash. Let me consider!” And with that Peg put her little hand to her brow with such another air of jaunty profundity I would have clinked down a fortune to have had her on canvas just as she sat—Peg, in the great chair that but an hour gone was mocking me as my most hateful enemy, and which now would be the friendliest thing in life.

CHAPTER XII

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL.

"This is how I shall do," said Peg at last, and after the General and I had waited upon her small profundity for some space; "this shall be my plan. We will have the White House for a reserve, then. The day for our cabinet folk to receive their friends will be Tuesday—the procession begins with the first Tuesday to follow New Year's Day. Our good little Secretary of State has suggested, inasmuch as I am to preside for him, that his house and mine be open only on alternate cabinet days. In short, we will receive together. On one Tuesday he will be at my house; on the next, when my house is closed, I will take stand in his drawing room and receive our guests for him. You know, too, how I am to be the head for what functions occur at the British and Russian legations and act as Lady of the Mansion for our friends, the Viscount Vaughn and Baron Krudener. Thus I begin with a double reception in my house for the good little secretary and myself; then at Krudener's; then at the good little secretary's; and then with the Eng-

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL.

lish. After that, we commence again at my own home."

"And when do you march my White House upon this desperate field?" demanded the General, with much gaiety of mien. Peg's vivacious recount of how she should move her social troops delighted him no little. "In what manner will I be made of use?"

"Why, then," said Peg, "after the reception at the English house if you will, you may give me a dinner, with a dance in the big East Room?" This was spoken in manner dubious and with the lifting inflection of a request. "Also, though it be much to ask, I could wish mightily for you to come in person to my reception. It would be a most convincing initial."

"And you doubt my coming?" asked the General, beamingly.

"It would be most unusual for a president," said Peg, shaking warning head. "The gossips would scarce survive the shock of it."

"My life," observed the General, in a most satisfied way, "has been made up of shocks to other folk."

"But you must consider," urged Peg, "how your appearance in any one's house would be held a letting down of your dignity. Indeed, in austere quarters, where the regular

is as a god, it would be regarded for a no slight rent in your robes."

"And yet, child, I shall come." This the General offered in a manner indescribably good. "I have been no man of precedent in my time; I care little for what was, but much for what is presently right. I shall come to your reception; more, I'll stay until you give me leave to go. If to be in the house of my friend, or to show him courtesy who has shown me only favor and good service—if that be to establish a rent in my presidency, I'll even promise to have it a thing of rags and patches before ever I am done."

"Then you will come!" exclaimed Peg. "Now shall we go bravely through! For, you are to know, so much of social concession or countenance is born of nothing save fear of loss or hope of place, that the herd will collect, bowing and smiling and shining like the sun, wherever you are known to be."

"These be, truly, most satisfying maps you draw," remarked the General, quizzically, "and yet I do not see how we are to tell when victory is ours. Now, in war the enemy surrenders or runs away."

"In the *salons*," said Peg, laughing at the General's quaint twists, "triumph turns to the mere question of numbers added to quality."

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

It is a matter of 'Who?' and 'How many?'—a count of carriages to your gate. But the query of quality is uppermost. Now, your presence at my house will outweigh the world, should it be so foolish as to gather itself together against us in the camps of the foe."

"Then you are indeed very safe," said the General, "since I shall be with you as I've said. Also, you are to have your dinner and that East Room ball to follow, on what day you lay the finger of your pretty preference. Even though I lacked the reason of my affection, I still could do no less for so beautiful an enemy of Calhoun. But you spoke of Van Buren. How did our round little friend go about his proposals of those joint receptions? I have a curiosity as to that argument which should lead him to this kindly wisdom; for, let me remind you, it is a stratagem worthy of a Cæsar, and one, besides, to smell most humanly of what is honest and staunch, this phrasing of a situation where your ill-wishers must become his ill-wishers and his friends take on terms of friendship for you. How did Van Buren go upon that proposition, child?"

"In the oddest way, then," smiled Peg. "He said that because we were both of tavern origin, with sires to keep houses of call, and since there might come proud folk to frown

upon us for that, it were a wisest thing, and one to make for the ease of them and us, to hold ever our receptions in common. Folk then might come, or stay away, and all with a prodigious saving of effort, whether of compliment or insult, to every one concerned. But, of course," said Peg, at the close, her eye a bit wet, "it was only his goodness to do this."

"Now, I believe nothing of that sort," declared the General, stoutly. "Child, I do not know by what paths you descend to this modest esteem of yourself, but it in nowise shakes the fact that, with the last of it, you grace and illustrate and honor the best room you enter or the best arm to lean on in the land."

Thus spoke the gallant General from his heart; and to me it was like milk and honey to only hear him. In the finish he turned his eyes my way.

"And where be your words in this council?" demanded the General. "Have you lost the will to speak?"

Now, I had kept myself mighty quiet since Peg was come back to her throne. For one thing, the simple sight of her, and she friendly, was enough to overflow my cup of happiness; moreover, I owned to some lurking fear of Peg, and imagined how I had but to

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

open my mouth to set her anger again on edge. At any rate, no stone could have said less than did I while Peg and the General held this long parley of the drawing rooms. When now, however, the General aimed at me direct, I was bound to make return.

"Have you no advice for us, then?" repeated the General. "It is not usual for you to so neglect my welfare. Here you permit me to talk ten minutes without once telling me fully and wholly just what I should do." All this in tones of jesting: "Now you would seem willing that I, and our little girl, too, should go unguided to destruction rather than unstrap your wisdom in our cause. Sir, do you call that the truth of a friend?"

"Perhaps I have no good eyes for these trails," said I. "Your reception perils and how to foil them are things I have not studied. I would but lose you your course were I to lead you."

"Mighty diffident," quoth the General, "and most suddenly abject! And no good eyes, say you? Why, then, you could see a church by daylight, I take it! At the least, you might cheer folk on who propose such deeds of carpet daring as do our little Peg and I."

With what further raillery the General might have entertained himself I came not to

know, for word was brought to him, at this nick, of ones who awaited his coming in the cabinet room. As he went away he called back to Peg, where she still abode in her leathern chair :

"Then it is settled and made. I shall be at your reception, to the grinding shock of gossips and the disorder of my presidential robes ; also, you are to dine and dance in the White House whenever you sweetly will."

"Where should have lodged more kindness for me than I now find here?" cried Peg, when the General was quite gone forth of the room. Then raising her warm eyes to mine where I sat wondering, now cold, now hot, would she go, or would she stay to talk with me, she gazed upon me with a steady, friendly look, which, for all it lacked of distance or any spirit of resentment, yet bred within me a feeling of confusion. I knew not how to meet it, and I could find no word to say. "And now," said Peg, after a pause, but very kindly, "let us have a fair moment of friendship. No," she went on, stopping me with her hand as I was beginning to stumble forward upon an apology for my ill words against Eaton, "no ; let me talk. You have no genius of explanation ; you would speak only to worsen things.

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL.

Besides, you dwell in the same darkness now you ever did."

"And it was to say that," I interjected, for I was bound to some remark, "I started to speak. It was to tell you how I had no close knowledge of your husband and owned no right of information to criticise him."

"Watch-dog!" cried Peg, motioning with little hands for silence, "watch-dog, will you have done?"

There was something of pain and reproach in this to stop me as though I had been planet-struck. Nor could I determine Peg's feeling, nor catch the color of it in a least of shade. For the most, I felt amazement, and was set back by the plain agitation of her, an agitation greater than was to have been looked for in one who came solely to pardon me those trespasses against good decent taste.

Peg called herself together with a shake of the head that had for one piquant effect the whipping of her shock of curls about her face, and leaving them a tangle to fall forward on her shoulders.

"Hear me," went on Peg, brightening, and peering out on me in an arch way through her curls; "you are guilty of no wrong save the wrong of incredible dullness. Therefore you are to offer no defence. Even your dull-

ness should have been a virtue in my eyes, since it spoke only of your honor, and told of the lofty place I hold in your regard." Now I could see how Peg was at least accepting all I had said, and not one part only, and would give me credit for a compliment to herself, while she refused my strictures upon Eaton. "Observe, then; I have resolved we two shall be good friends. Better friends than before, because better to understand one another. And our trouble was my fault, too, not yours. Nor had I one right foot to go upon."

"Now, that is the maddest charity of error!" cried I.

"It is not, I say," returned Peg, her eyes beginning to shine with the first flavor of my opposition. "I say it is not. You had done nothing, said nothing; while I—why, then I hated you for having eyes of lead. But we will amend that." Here Peg turned pleasantly brisk. "We have been too much abroad with mistakes. We have made you too old and me too young in our dealings. There shall be a change, and you and I hereafter are to consider ourselves as folk of even years, each with the other. It is but right, watchdog, for though you have no learning on that point, it is none the less true that a woman of twenty-two is very old and very wise, while a

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

man of forty-four is for his youth and guilelessness, or I should have said dullness, a creature insupportable. Yes, watch-dog, for your ignorance you are insupportable; but I forgive you, since it is your only defect." And here Peg recovered her old gay smile, and with that my heart came home again to peace.

"Well," I said, when Peg would let me be heard, "I make no secret that I am over happy with this new prospect of your friendship. It was night while I thought you would not forgive me my offence."

"Say no more of it," cried Peg, sharply, putting her fingers in her ears. At the same time I caught the milky shine of her leopard teeth. "Say no more, or I shall go back to my anger as a refuge. Speak of something else! Why did you turn my chair out of door?—my poor chair that had done no harm!" Peg caressed the arms of it with her palms as though it were alive and could know and feel her petting. "You did it because you hated me."

"No, forsooth!" I protested. "Now if I had only hated you it might have stayed till the fall of doom. But I could not bear the leering, mocking look of it, and me deserted; it would seem ever to brew for me a cup of

loneliness. And so for that I thrust it from the room."

"Why, then! and that was it!" cried Peg. "There you see, now, I can be a fool as well as you."

"But why did you avoid me?" I asked, in my turn. "Surely, even for my dull clumsiness, there was need of no such hard reproof. Come, now, why did you stay away? And why did you run from me when I went across to the square that day to beg a word from you?"

"Because I hated you," returned Peg, with a self-satisfied air. "I hate you now, watch-dog, when I pause and think. You had made me suffer, and I thought to see you suffer in return. And really, watch-dog, you did suffer; and it pleased me much."

"I had not thought you were made with such a palate for revenge," said I, a bit stricken with these words of cruelty. "And yet, if it so pleasure you to give me pain, why then, go on."

"Don't, watch-dog, don't," returned Peg, in a voice whimsically between crying and laughing. "Only a little more of that and you shall have my tears. But can't you see how your suffering was a most tender compliment? I declare to you that when I would go by your door, the look of grief to weigh upon

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

your brow was better to me than a smile. The mere memory of it would keep my heart warm throughout a winter's day."

"It must indeed be a topsy-turvy nature," said I, "that finds its pleasure in the woe of friends."

"No recriminations, watch-dog," retorted Peff, in a high vein. "If your dullness have no limits, at the least my patience has. Now where did you go when I avoided you in the square, and you were too much the coward to lift the knocker of my door? Fie! such another fawn-heart does not roam existence! Where did you go, I say?"

"Well, I would give that vine of yours a tree to clamber on and lift it off the ground."

"And did you," demanded Peg, eagerly.

"The gods ruled otherwise," I returned. "There was no tree to be near or possible for your vine; it must live and die on the ground."

Peg sat quite still and never a response. As I looked on her, somewhat with wonder, I concede, two great drops welled from her eyes and fell down upon her hands.

"Now I would like to hear," said Peg at last, her voice in a twitter of pain, "does ever one get what one prays for in this world of ours? Would there be such a word as contentment, now? However, I am glad, watch-

dog, your good heart took you to my vine. But let it go; let it all go! Let us be friends; and if the day can't be for us all sunshine, let us own as few clouds as we may. Now, we will forget the past, and start our friendship out anew. We will bring nothing to remind us of days when I was young and cunning and you were old and dull."

At this, I involuntarily looked for the mark of Peg's leopard tooth, where, round and white, it stared up at me from my hand.

"Ah, yes!" said Peg, softly, "I had forgotten. There is that sign between us that shall last through time. No, we can never forget." Then, after musing a moment: "But we may change the subject and say the worst of it. You heard me lay out my reception purposes. What do you think of my plans?"

"Tell me first one thing," said I. "When it was so much pleasure to behold me in grief for your absence, why, then, did you come back?" That speech of Peg's was like a dagger in my heart, and I would have her draw it out with some kindness of explanation. "Why did you come back, then?"

"The mere sorrow of it brought me back, watch-dog," said Peg, and her words were music in my ear. "It came finally to where I would sooner suffer than have you suf-

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

fer. That is the woman nature of me. The sheer truth is, I've been on my way back to you for days. When I followed you in the square, it was with a full purpose of taking your arm and walking with you as in the old time."

"And why didn't you?"

"Just as I would have done so, I was caught up in a little swirl of hatred which carried me away from your side. It didn't last the moment, but by the time it was gone the chance had taken flight. There is one thing I should tell you, however; at such a time you must not palter with a woman." Peg's tones were uplifted to the pitch severe. "Do you know what you should have done that day? You should have seized me by the shoulder as you did that spy who dogged us; you should have stopped me flush and full. Without excuse or explanation or pretense of remorse for what had been, you should have made me take your arm. You might have found, had you so willed it, that for all my high head I would follow you like a dog."

"Take you by the shoulder!" cried I, somewhat aroused to a spirit of terror. "And that would have been polite, indeed, and the act of a true gentleman! I can see myself seizing you by the shoulder!"

"For all that," contended Peg, with much candor, "that is what you should have done. Remember: in treating with a woman, while one *should* be a gentleman—your word—one *must* be a man. There is this, too, about a woman with the man she would love. She likes warfare but she does not want to win; victory would only embarrass your woman. Her instinct is rather for protection than to protect, and to find him on whom she leans weaker than herself might alarm her love into flight. And as for that politeness you tell of, it is an artifice, like a dress or a house, and good only within a limit. There be occasions when politeness to a man is a fair thing thrown away; also, there be occasions when politeness to a woman is nothing better than a waste of justice. Watch-dog, you should have pocketed the 'gentleman' for use on a languid day; you should have been all 'man.' You should have seized me by the shoulder; you should have made me go or stay, or talk or stand mute, as you willed. It was for that"—and Peg gave me this gravely, like some confident Pythoness sure of her Apollo-inspired word—"it was for that, watch-dog, you were made the stronger of us two."

Now here was a pretty word of caution! It was as the General once said: one had only

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

to listen, and lo! one would hear ever the savage stirring about in Peg.

"There is one thing whereof I was cheated," said I, after a brief silence, and seeking to give our talk a slighter, if not a direction of more reason. "You were to give me lessons in yourself. I looked forward to no little improvement from such good teaching, and when I was made to go missing it I could feel a plain loss to myself."

"And perhaps now," observed Peg, with her half-merry glance, "I was giving you a lesson in Peg for every moment of that frowning time." Then, as if in reply to my look of bewilderment: "No, watch-dog I went too fast in those threats to expound myself. You are in no sort prepared for so tremendous a course of study."

"Wherein do I lack now?"

"Why, you flounder in abyssmal ignorance of yourself. To study another with a hope of light, one should first own some liberal knowledge of one's self. To have gone about to teach you that difficult lesson of Peg, you, who are as unaware of yourself as any bush or tree or tuft of grass, would have been as truly wise, and a task well worth one's while, as would be a discussion of Moore with that savage of the woods who has yet to hear of the alphabet.

However, we will rest content with you as you are, oh, watch-dog! oh, slave of Peg, wearing her mark! The more, for that your splendid ignorance of both yourself and me has to be its characteristic, a white, high beauty like unto some snow capped peak—safe, too, since inaccessible. And now, because I have stayed long; and because we are good friends again; and because we will infallibly quarrel should I remain, I think, watch-dog, I shall go home.”

And so Peg went away, singing a little song which was no song but like the whistle of some thrush, leaving me in a calm of peace; nor did I fail to remember how Peg’s tune, when she departed, was the earliest music upon her lips since ever she would be in anger with me for those ill opinions against Eaton.

There was no long time given me to think on Peg and her whims of temper, black and white, for Noah was with me briskly on the tail of her going away. Noah brought with him that Blair who had come in deference to my note, to be the rival of Duff Green and organize the *Globe* as a death-stab to Duff’s *Telegraph*. I had met Blair before, and liked him; most of all was he a favorite of the General, for his pen was fed of fire and the heart of his friendship was like the loyal heart of a dog. In person, Blair was a

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

slender, sickly man, but with a great head on his shoulders, and strange feverish eyes that shone like jewels. He was not unlike the General; only the latter stood vastly taller, and, while Blair was as some fire to blaze and sparkle and burn, the General would be more that hurricane of wind, bridled of no man, sweeping flat as a field of turnips everything to stand in the way.

"Here is a delicate question," said Noah, with his grin of the cynic. "The department folk will give our friend, Blair, no public printing; it goes all to Duff. That should be stopped, since your public advertising—I speak from my place as an editor—is for your newspaper as the breath in its body."

"And what would you propose by way of cure for that felon perversity of our folk of the departments who will still send printing to the recreant Duff?" This I put laughingly, to be abreast of the lightness of Noah.

"Surely," said Blair, speaking with a kind of eagerness natural to him, and which ran red-hot throughout all he did; "surely, the president must make no personal interference. Were he to order printing out of one paper and into another, the opposite side would use it for a club against him to the last day of his career."

"But there is a way," said Noah. "We may have advantage of the mean fears of our folk of place who are ever prompt to read a threat against themselves. Such egotists do they grow to be that, following a decade of office holding, it may not so much as thunder but your agitated desk-man knows it at once for some plot of heaven's hand to snatch him from his pap."

"How would you approach these fears with an appeal?" I asked.

"And there could be nothing easier," quoth Noah, "while missing every word that might look like an order from the White House. You have but to issue a request, addressed to each who is in control of any least of printing, to send to the president with every month a full report of what advertisements he has dispensed and to what imprints. There you have it in your claw; after such notice not one line will go to Duff, but all to Blair. With the one stone you kill two birds; the *Telegraph* is destroyed while the *Globe* in its fortunes is made beyond a chance."

"Your mighty proper suggestion will be adopted," said I. "The request you speak of goes forth this very day."

When Blair had departed the scene to look after the daily fortunes of his paper, Noah

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

and I, as was much and frequently our case, settled to a mouthful of party gossip. We had not run far, however, when my Jim appeared with a word from the General to meet him in his personal workshop on some trivial concern.

"D'Marse Gen'ral trees Jim by d'winder," said that worthy black man, "an' tells him to ask you-all, Marse Major, to come squanderin' along down to his room. He allows, d'Marse Gen'ral does, how he's got letters from home you might like to see."

"And how is your 'Marse Gen'ral'?" said Noah, for "the red-head Jew gentleman," as Jim ever referred to him, was fond of making Jim talk. "How does your 'Marse Gen'ral' carry himself these winter days?"

"Mighty toler'ble an' tranquil, thankee, sah!" replied Jim; "mighty toler'ble an' tranquil. Jim on'y wishes he himse'f was feelin' half so good. But Jim's got a mis'ry in his back, an' d'rheumatics in his laigs an' shoulders ontwell he can't but jes' make out to hobble 'round. Yassir; them rheumatics leaves Jim like a fly in a saucer of m'llasses; he gets about plumb slow."

Jim furnished a most doleful air to be the frame for this piece of news; one might have thought him some flame-enveloped martyr.

"At any rate," said Noah, in tones of greatest sympathy, "you are fortunate, Jim, since now you are an invalid, in having such a kind, forbearing master as your 'Marse Major' here."

"D'Marse Major aint so mighty bad," observed Jim, with the face of one who considers deeply. "Course he has his spells. Thar's times when he's sort o' amiable, d'Marse Major is; an' then Jim nacherally takes to him like a honeysuckle to a front porch. Then thar's other days when Jim quits him an' goes streakin' it for d'tall grass. Them's d'times when d'Marse Major takes to t'arin' about loose, an' carryin' all befo' him like a b'ar in a hawg-pen."

Having disposed of the letter which had given the loquacious Jim that delay required for these important disclosures, I put an end to them by carrying Noah away to the General's room. He would expostulate and hold back; but I made him come with me on the plea of how the General had asked to talk with him of that coming Nullification banquet to be held at the Indian Queen.

"True, he has heard it from me," said I, "but what then? You know how folk are. He would hear it from you first-hand."

While I was running over the General's

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

mails from Tennessee, that eminent person and Noah waded forth into deep and animated converse.

"I am rather glad than otherwise," said the General, lighting the while the usual friendly pipe, "for that treason dinner our Calhoun clique would plan. I shall go; should they ask it, I'll even give them a toast. I will light a torch for them; I would be the last to have it said I let folk go blundering to a gibbet in the dark."

"You recall," remarked Noah, "how zealous were certain influences for that Florida post, and how they would have it go to one Westfall?"

"The man Westfall," retorted the General, "was an utter weakling. He never would have done for such a place. The Florida governorship is of consequence; its duties call for one of force. I have thought on a man for it, but the time has not come. The present incumbent does fairly well for an Adams selection."

"That weakness of Westfall to which you refer," said Noah, "was, I take it, no slight merit in the minds of those who stood by the elbow of his hope. It was a part of the Nullification scheme, the putting forward of Westfall."

"In what sort?" asked the General. "I know how Calhoun desired him, for Duff Green told us so much when we were not a week in town."

"Westfall's success for the place would have linked to the Vice-President the richest, strongest elements in Pennsylvania. Then there is Florida itself—two-thirds Spanish and by no means in love with the balance of this country. With a weak governor in St. Augustine, and one who owed his crown to our Vice-President, what should be simpler, in the event of secession in South Carolina, than to count on Floridian men and money for the venture?"

"They will do as well without their Westfall," commented the General. "Mayhap they will do better, since had they succeeded for him, it might hereafter have given their rashness inspiration, and turned them gallows-ripe. One thing sure: let them once rebel against the law—let them but rise in Calhoun's state to the law's defiance—and I will burn them from the earth. They shall be destroyed root and stalk and standing grass, with the reptiles that crawl between. Their leaders shall swing for it so surely as my name is Jackson or there's such a word as 'President' in the land."

Here I come near to the first true social test to be put upon our Peg, and that, you

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

will know, was the reception which she would give as a cabinet lady at her own home on the Georgetown side of the President's Square. And now, when I am driven by stress of this tale to furnish you with a handful of hints or little twigs of description concerning the business, I write as though with fetters on my wrists. It is because I have no *salon* learning, and was never taught your lessons of chandeliers and wax-lights and orchestras and tables spread with elegance and palms and flowers and folk brilliant on evening parade, formidably engaged, each with a part like people in a play, in bringing off one of those encounters where well dressed men and women meet to crowd each other and call the trial a function. If it were to be a battle or even some quiet-lying landscape with its stretch of river, and a forest to fringe the banks, and mayhap a mountain chain with its plushy dress of pines to the background, I might not come on so haltingly. But this, as it were, is to lay a fence of stone—and that, you are to witness, means a journey full of backaches—to be here piling one word upon another for the story of a drawing-room three hours.

Van Buren was himself Peg's partner for this reception—his own doors closed, as Peg explains in rearward pages when she talks with

the General. It would be then, a double reception, and both the State and the War Departments to stand thereof the social sponsors.

Word had crept abroad how the General himself planned a place among the callers, and at the grave tidings Duff Green, in his paper, was driven to extremes of frantic ink over the proposed lowering of the presidency to cabinet levels, which latter the disturbed Duff would seem to think were common, even if they were not bad.

"The White House," cried Duff, in his shocked columns, "should not be taken down from that high place of elevation in which our late president was pleased to leave it."

"Truly, an excellent thought!" observed the General, "to set Adams before me for a model! Why, man! from his purchase of the rogue Clay down to the last measure to meet the flourish of his pen and be made a law thereby, I call it patriotism to turn my back on every position Adams occupied, and the very essence of right to undo all he did. Me to follow Adams! I should as soon think of emulating Billy Weatherford and his Creeks."

"But why stand over me," said I, "with all this arm tossing and threatening declamation? It is your Duff Green and not I who would thus drive you to an Adams example."

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

"Well," said the General, somewhat subdued by this thought, "you at least are here and I must vent myself on some one."

While both the General and I lived in a deal of fog concerning such coils, neither of us was torn of doubt as to the certainty of Peg's triumph. Vaughn and Krudener, for the favor of Van Buren, would lead up the legation folk as bell-sheep lead a flock; the military element was bound to Peg's chariot-wheel by merest war department bonds; withal, the General's presence alone would mean a multitude, and that of gaudiest feather, for it asked no skill of society to know how that same impulse of self-interest was ever at work to move it, as much as might be said of any conspiracy of roughest politics. The General as the present source of things temporal would be courted; and to that sycophantish end your swarming brood of courtiers would be found tagging at his back though he were to make a sulphurous pilgrimage and seek the pit itself.

There came one thing, however, to rub my fur against the grain; but this was of the week prior to our Tuesday of Peg's reception. It is the great marvel how it will ever be the slight affair to ruffle one. I have known a rascal to crack off his pistol at me for a no better reason than strong drink; and yet beyond

a busy interest to stun him and prevent a return of his experiment, and so settle safety in my favor, my bosom went as rippleless of wrath as any millpond. On the other side, the idle whistle of some fellow, and him outside the house and of no knowledge even of my being, has sent me off on storms of rage.

This it was to nag me into irritation. There arrived one day a mighty casket of jewels for Peg—diamonds and rubies they were, and ones a princess might have worn with honor. They were a gift from Eaton; for that secretary was notably rich and owned the treasure-chests of an emperor.

Peg said naught of these trinkets, whether to the General or to me, nor did she show them. But since they came in from New York, employing for their safety certain armed guardians of express, the thing could be called no secret. Moreover, Eaton himself would probably be the last to smother the story of these chains and bracelets and brooches and coronets and flashing whatnot, since for what else did he buy them save self-love and to deck Peg out as one decks out a horse on gala days. That man never loved Peg; it was a mark of sentiment beyond him. He had a pride of her as of a gem or a picture, and wore her beauty as one wears a decoration.

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

But he no more knew Peg, no more loved Peg, than cud-cattle know and love the stars above their stolid heads. Her praise would ring sweet to his ear, yes; her loveliness and the bright glory of her eyes would lighten his face. Also, the moon will light you and shine again on the face of that chance-hollowed mud-hole which the rains have filled and the swine enjoyed.

It is but truth to say that my resentment of these jewels to Peg gave me a pause of uneasiness. It was not the little fact of their existence which bayed me; it was not that I went pricked as though by nettles because of these gewgaws; that was not it. But why should I be pricked at all? Other folk would bring diamonds to their wives or sweethearts, and you meet none who owned to less excitement or a colder interest thereover than myself. Why, then, should these stir my pulse and set my anger to a trot? It were indeed a thing most passing strange, and one whereof I was bound to find the bottom if I called myself an honest man.

The question of my anger for Peg's jewels hung about me like lead, I tell you; for to myself I made free confession of that wrath and would hide nothing of it from my conscience. I was stout to drag myself to the

bar, and to sit in trial over my own heart. Was it love of Peg to move me? The General had told me how I had been swept away in love for her from the first; but that was his jest and the bantering humor of him at the time. Was I in love with Peg? And if not, then wherefore fly to arms for that Eaton would hang the common gifts of man to wife about her charms and strive for her delight? That was the question I held before my soul's eyes and shook it for an answer.

In a trice the riddle was replied to; the reasons of my anger unrolled before me like a scroll. It was not that I loved Peg; it was my certain sureness how Eaton himself was master of no such true sentiment, nor one worthy of the word. As I have said, he but held her—being below a better thought—to adorn his vanity; he would wrap her in his riches in the vulgarity of a boast. Peg was as the feather to his hat, the jewel to his hilt; he trapped her in brilliants just as he drunk from cut-glass. And knowing Peg as I knew her, and with a deep appreciation of her worth, was it miracle, or must my heart be charged of crime, because my brow would flush to see her thus abased and set to nurse so gross a self-esteem? Besides, it fell as a blow upon one's better taste,

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

since to embellish Peg with such earthenware was indeed to paint a lily and gild gold.

It was true, I so much resented these jewels, and they so bit my feeling in advance, that I went at wits' end to fish forth some excuse for being absent from that reception and thus avoid their tawdry splendors. But when I moved the matter, the General was set like iron that I should go.

Were it the General alone to cross my temper for this, I should have run over him, no doubt, and had my way for it. But next stood Peg in the path. I no more than breathed a half-suggestion of possible conditions to arise and keep me from the house, when she glowed on me with a look so gently pleading that, without waiting for her to speak, I straightway told her I would come.

"And I am glad, watch-dog," said Peg, simply. "I could give myself no reason, save a reason that would burn like fire, why you should stay away."

It should be noted, perhaps, that the magical tale of those gems ran in and out of the mouth of gossip for prior days, and I doubt not a purpose to look on them—for the feminine eye is caught with glitter like a black-bird, which hollow fowl will think of nothing for a week on end save how to steal a bit of

broken glass—brought as many to Peg's reception as did the presence of the General.

And here, being now upon the brink, I fairly ask you what should be the use of setting forth how the carriages rolled to the gate; and how Peg stood like some flower beneath the light of a chandelier—for these receptions were in the evening—with her “good little secretary” by her side, welcoming the throngs to press forward in her honor? The Calhouns were not there; and, indeed, the folk from the Vice-President's own state would be obviously absent. The other cabinet folk—that Calhoun trio, the ladies Branch and Berrien and Ingham—did not appear; but then they were upon certain similar receptions of their own. However, there came scores to have their places. There were the lion Webster, the courtly Vaughn, Krudener with red heels to his shoes, red waistcoat, and earrings to his ears, Noah with his black, dangerous eyes, and a high-caste multitude, besides, from Senate and House and Supreme Court and Legations, and those two score other lofty lairs of your utter capital fashion. There arose the never-ceasing gride of carriages as they came and went incessantly upon the frozen gravel; there crawled the endless file of hand-shaking folk, the grave and the gay, the young and the old, the beautiful and

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

the ugly, the good and the bad—this last since there stood no process of elimination to separate the sheep from the goats where all who would might come. And Peg went through it with a sweet, grave grace; and even surly Envy submitted to the verdict of a vast success and one to fix Peg's standing beyond distrust, and mark itself, besides, as the hopeless Waterloo of her every last ill-wisher.

The General, bright of eye and unbending as a bayonet, was there early to remain late.

"I have enlisted for the campaign," said he, "and I shall stay while I hear of one foe to be in the field."

Never had I known him to look better, and the old-time deference wherewith he would be about Peg so that all might see his regard for her was like a page from chivalry.

And now I must tell a tale on myself, and show how this was to twist into a happy hour for me and I be harrassed by no sordid hatefulness of those jewels. I had, for my shame be it told, gone to my place in the line of calling folk with a reluctance that bound my breast like a rope. I could scarce breathe for it. The file moved slowly, but I held my head high, and, being a tall man, looked easily over Peg and did not once rest my eyes upon her.

I would escape the canker of those barbarous rubies and diamonds.

It was the tones of a woman, who had Peg by her hand, to rivet my interest.

"Why! where now be those diamonds I heard so much about?" The voice was of the empty tin-pan kind that tells of society and mighty little else. "Where be those diamonds? Or was the story false?"

Then I heard Peg in cold retort to our she-savage and her coarse greed to look on diamonds.

"Why, I believe I have a few handfuls somewhere about the house," said Peg. "If it be those you are come to see, I shall have pleasure in directing you to my maid."

Now when quite close I bent my slow eyes upon our little Peg. There she stood, a lamp of beauty! and never the sign of your diamonds or rubies about her—nothing of ornament save a rose my Jim had brought, and the little coral of my mother's which Peg took from the cabinet on that summer day. As she offered me her hand, she lifted up her face to mine. She gave me no word but the red blood showed in her cheek a match for my coral. Then her eyes fell; and next, with a heart full to foolishness of a joy that was like a mystery, I passed on to walk the air and join the General.

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

"Our victory was measureless," declared the General, in the stiff manner of him who makes report, when late that night he and I were about our inevitable pipes in his room. The General would discuss Peg's reception. "Sir, it was absolute triumph. Do you know how Peg's function compared with those of the enemy? 'Quantity and quality' were her words; you remember that. Do you know on those two points, how our affair compared with those of Ingham and Berrien and Branch? You do not? Sir, you surprise me, and you to be a soldier whom I myself taught! Why! how are you to know when we win or lose if you keep no account of the fight? 'Quantity and quality,' mark you! that is the test." The General was in towering spirit and as exalted of brow as one might wish to see. It was like the real war to him. "Now," he went on, "I was of a mind to know results; I took measures for a count of noses, and a list of your folk who called at those four cabinet houses to-day. Sir, it may please you to hear that on both proposals of 'quality and quantity' Peg and you and I overpowered those Redsticks as ten would overpower one."

The General smoked on in silent satisfaction; I said nothing, my mind being wholly taken with my coral on Peg's bosom, and never

mark of diamond or ruby for a blemish to the rich beauty of her neck and face and the cataract of gold-black hair to fall about her shoulders.

"Peg is a grand girl!" mused the General. "It is pity, too; she should have been a man and a soldier. And then the pure taste of her! You have heard of a peck, more or less, of diamonds which Eaton brought on from the North? I looked to see them wreathed about Peg's neck or arms or fingers or wherever heaven meant they should go. And, mind you! not a trace of them. 'Why,' says our Peg, when I would question her, 'they were of such wondrous richness I thought it shame to wear them in my own drawing room—and me no more than a girl—and set them against older, better folk who would be my guests. It would have been to over-crow them, and as though I sought to pamper vanity at their cost. Wherefore, in compliment, I would not wear them, but put them all aside. Now, this bit of coral is better, since more modest. It was from a sweetheart, and is the one thing I love best of all the world.' Was there not fineness for you?" demanded the General. "Was there not magnanimity? What other woman between the poles could have withstood her hands from those gems? Or who, from mere kindness and

HOW PEG WOULD WEAR THE CORAL

to spare the women about her their own envy, would have thrust them away to don that coral trifle in their stead? A tavern's daughter, forsooth! Why, such a spirit would give a grace beyond her title to a duchess! I know of nothing more good or noble to tell the silken nature of our little Peg."

CHAPTER XIII

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

Peg's war for social eminence would now move bravely. The tale of that double reception with its polite throngs pushing forward in honor of her and her "good little secretary," and the General's presence thereat, stately yet deferential, fluttered from lip to lip like some bright bird. And, as such birds will, the farther it fluttered the brighter it grew. I've told you how I own no warrant, whether of education or natural trend, to descant on wax-lights and polished floors and satins; but so far as I might trap the murmur of folk who should have such matters of gossamer and music on their tongues' ends, the most guarded decision went to it that Peg's position had become thereby as surely fixed as the pole-star, and might with as much safety be observed and steered by whenever any of your blind mariners of the drawing rooms should lose a course or find himself in deep, strange waters.

Like a great captain who in the wake of victory makes speed to again strike the enemy,

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

while yet the latter is disorganized and before he can re-collect formation or even hope, Peg was next and swiftly in the field with that dinner for her glory at the Russian legation, tendered by the wily Baron Krudener—he of the earrings and the scarlet heels. The Tartar, as the General called him, zealous for the favor of the General and Van Buren, was keen to note how a civility done Peg would become a key to the best good will of both. After Krudener's, came the cabinet reception at our "good little secretary's," where Peg would reign; and since Van Buren lived but a half-dozen houses north from Peg's, it was hardly to step beyond her own door. Then followed the ball given by the British with Peg in the place of esteem, and the Viscount Vaughn to lead Peg forth in the first figure with his own diplomatic hand.

Who could have been more delighted than the General with this splendor of *salon* success now spread to our pretty Peg's uninterrupted feet, and that under the jaundiced eyes of her enemies? The General could not be present at either the "good little secretary's," the Russian or the English house; but he was indomitable to hear; and never exquisite, nor macaroni, nor buck about London town, gave ear of warmer ardor to the nightly annals of

Mayfair than did the General to those stories of Peg's victories. Who were there and what they did and said, would be his constant curiosity; and indeed he carried question-putting to the verge of what stood foppish.

"But can't you see, sir," demanded the General, when I told him how his heat to trace Peg's skirts through every dance, or learn the calling list of each reception, would jostle one's better conception of him, "can't you see that with the world and the law as made, this is the trial of Peg's standing, and freighted of life or death?"

"No," said I, full bluntly; "and if you will have my notion then, I call these things mere antic matters of apeish trick and chatter, not worth a man's attention."

"You are a barbarian," retorted the General, oracularly. "These functions—these dinners and dances and receptions—are trials by jury where the repute of folk, peculiarly the repute of women folk, is passed upon. The verdict in her favor means the world and all for Peg. It is the law."

"And if it be," said I, "it is but a bad law and a cheap law, and one whereat I should snap my fingers."

"And yet, sir," replied the General, "wondrous highly as you hold yourself, you are not

yet grown to be the world. It's Peg's happiness—a matter of being within the pale, without which she would feel decided against and spurned. And remember this, sir, while you flourish with your defiances, that a bad law is none the less a law, with penalty in nowise to be mollified because of that badness at which you rail. Wherefore I deem, these drawing-room trinkets of a first weight in Peg's concerns; I shall know as much of them as I well may, and take my chance of falling in your graces."

After that, and somewhat in the broader manner of a jest, I would each day lay out to the General whatever of polite gaities took place the night before; and while I recited those present, and what they did or said, or failed to do or say, and particular when such relation told for Peg, he would smoke, and listen, and exult, and on occasion comment like unto any grandmother gossip who still enjoys by second hands those scenes which long ago her years taught her to desert.

These exploits of waxed floors and dinner tables, while the General might have neither art nor lot therein, drew me along with them—for all I loved them not—like a magnet. For one thing, I would behold how Peg fared; and then, the General would have me attend,

to the purpose that he be given their story. It was at the Russian's that I was called on to witness the iron steadiness of Peg—albeit I could have wished the Dutch jade, who offended, a man, that I might pinch his neck. You must know, then, how the Minister from the Netherlands was a bloated creature of beer and butter-tub proportions—a Herr Huygens, he was; and Frau Huygens, his lady—save the mark!—was as dropsical as he. The latter ungentlewoman would be a waddling, duck-built cabbage thing of fifty years; and of no little standing for a money-prudence and strict economy, since while as rich as that commerce of gin by which her spouse had builded up their fortunes, she owned celebration for but one frock—a most fantastic garment for color and flounce like the garb of a clown in a kirmess.

At the Krudener dinner, your Frau Huygens, whose place was next to Peg's, would up and leave her chair immediately she was seated; and all with a lofty face as of one insulted, and following a great looking of Peg over through a spying glass.

Spurred by this rudeness, Krudener directed a servant to remove the chair and plate and table furniture of that place. This was swiftly done; and next, to show his own feeling

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

of the insolence offered under his roof, our Russian would have the plate and the rest, including the gilt chair, broken to pieces in one corner of the apartment and thrown upon the blaze in the vast fireplace.

"They have been used by that woman of canals and gin-casks," explained Krudener—under his exterior of quiet diplomacy and with his eye on Van Buren, I could tell how the Muscovite was in a towering rage—"and I have no servant so low he would now eat off that plate or sit in that chair. Let them be destroyed, and with them the recollection of the offence to our fair guest, which throughout my life I shall deplore." With this Krudener bowed deeply to Peg.

"Since you say so much, Baron," responded Peg, "I am driven to tell you that you need have been to no disturbance. I should have remarked that person's going only for the relief it gave to be free of the nearness of one so gross."

This our pretty Peg got off in a way of relieved superiority that was invincible; she lost nothing through the episode, but would gain ground thereby for her bearing.

In my first ill-humor to see this reasonless slight put upon our Peg, I looked about for the rotund Herr Huygens, with a view, I sup-

pose—although I remember no clear plan in my angry head at the time—to have his opinion on the conduct of that wife, since he as her lord would be responsible. He was not present, nor had he been; it was as well, for I might have forgotten his sacred character as a Minister and said or done that which should be a further and more depressing jolt to the proprieties.

The General, when he learned of the business, was even warmer than myself. He was all for having Van Buren give Herr Huygens his walking papers, and would scarce listen to less. The “good little secretary,” with Peg, herself, to aid, won him from his mood to banish the Dutchman and that offensive Frau. It bred a sharp alarm in the bosom of Herr Huygens, for he would as soon lay down his life as his post of Minister, over the proud eminence whereof he gloated much.

An incident more to be merry with, and one carrying within itself the elements of fair reproof, came off in the house of the English.

By this time your drawing-room forces had greatly abandoned the Vice-President's wife and the ladies Berrien, Branch and Ingham, to follow Peg. Among these, and glittering in the van, shone the vainglorious Pigeon-breast. It was at the dance of the Viscount

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

Vaughn that Pigeon-breast, after deeply considering the butter on his bread, made obviously and obsequiously up to Peg.

In his earlier advances I did not see the tinsel fellow or I might have interposed to dash his good resolves; I was to first know of him in these bright relations of friendship for our side when I gained a glimpse of him across the wide ball room where, with Peg's hand held high, and maintaining a mighty respectful distance between them as though Peg were majesty itself, he led her through one of those slow dances—more, indeed, like a promenade than any dance—which had vogue of that hour.

I waited with much irritation until the dance was to its end and Peg at liberty. I remembered, however, in her defence, that Peg was not aware of Pigeon-breast for one who had sought her harm. No one had told her of that splendid long speech to the General when Pigeon-breast chose to represent "Mrs. Calhoun and the ladies of Washington," which latter term, under the scorching fire of Peg's successes, had dwindled to a sour handful scarce equal to the task of filling a dinner table or constructing a quadrille.

"Why should you dance," said I, when now I had gotten Peg by herself near a window, "why should you dance with such a coxcomb?"

"You mean," returned Peg, "to tell me that he is no friend. As for that, I've known him for an ill-wisher and, as far as his frail strength went, an ill-doer, from the beginning."

"And how would that news come to you?" said I. "Has the rogue said anything?"

"Not so fierce, watch-dog, not so fierce!" whispered Peg. "Folk present are not cognizant of your mastiff sort and might wonder to learn of it. Wherefore, go quietly about me with your guardianship." Peg would be amused by the energy of my distaste of Pigeon-breast. "The 'rogue' has said nothing. I knew he was my wrong-wisher from yourself."

"Me?" cried I. "And how should you have had it from me when I have not breathed of the popinjay's existence?"

"How? Why, from your face, where I've been long wont to read much more than your tongue has ever told."

"What of my face, then?"

"And I have wished you might see it! Whoever it was to approach me, I had but to watch your brow. Was your brow frank, open, friendly: he who came was a friend. Did you lower and gloom hatefully: he was an enemy who rapped at the gate. Now you gave this fop the look of a fiend when one day he would

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

pass us in the square. And so by the light, or rather the twilight of your frown, I read him."

"All exceeding clever," said I, half made to laugh by the airy fashion wherein Peg would toss this off, "all exceeding clever. But it brings me with interest to my question, why, then, did you honor him with a dance?"

"For the same reason," said Peg, with a look of funny malice, "that an Indian scalps his foe."

"Now what should that mean?"

"Wait and see, oh watch-dog!"

It was a bit later when Peg was again by my side.

"Do you know why I am back with you?" she asked. "Well, aside from the profound pleasure of your company, the more profound by contrast with that of those vapid ones"—here she would include the ball room males with a sweep of her round arm—"I thought I would scalp my enemy before your eyes. You have a violent nature, watch-dog, and I reflected how the exhibition might bring you joy. Since you do not dance, your time must lie on your hands like iron; I would do somewhat to lighten it."

Before I could ask Peg to unravel the intent of her long speech, Pigeon-breast was pushing valourously our way.

"He comes for a second dance," said
 "See, his name is next on my card."

"And call you that scalping?" cried
 "At that rate, every man in the room will
 pete for your cruelty! Scalping, say ye
 wish for the simple humor of it, a Sen
 might hear you."

The truth was I had fallen into a dupe
 with Peg for her notion of taking a truce
 she would confer heaven on this Pigeon-brother
 and call it "scalping!"

"I believe," observed Pigeon-brother,
 his nose fairly to the floor, so deeply bowed
 bow, "I believe I will have the honor of an
 dance"—here another bow as lowly as the
 first.

As Pigeon-brother resumed the perpendicular,
 he crooked his gallant arm invitingly
 would lead Peg to her place.

But Peg drew back, as much to my surprise
 as that of the wonder-stricken Pigeon-brother
 himself, and with a manner coldly dignified
 said:

"There is a mistake, sir; I could
 promised you no dance, since I do not know
 you."

"Mistake!" gasped Pigeon-brother.

"Mistake," repeated Peg, with, if
 thing, an access of ice. "I never before

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

you ; I could have put you down for no dance. One does not dance with strangers." Then to me : " Your arm, if you please."

As I carried Peg away, Pigeon-breast was heard to inarticulately moan and whine like a high wind in a keyhole. Later I beheld him desperately, in the refreshment room, drinking strong waters with both hands and as though he had a fish in his stomach.

" And now," said I to Peg, as we moved away from the crushed Pigeon-breast, " why were you so bitter? That empty fellow was not worth so much. Besides, you have shamed him before the town; you hurt him to the heart."

" Hurt him to the vanity," corrected Peg. " If it be true that nothing dries more quickly than a woman's tear—and it is true, watch-dog—nothing cures more quickly than the hurt vanity of a man. That dandy will anon be as gay as a peacock. However, I would punish him. I have made him an Ishmael of the drawing-rooms; I have driven him forth from us, and he cannot return to the others for his apostasy of their cause is known. Did I not tell you, watch-dog, I was a revengeful woman?"

Altogether, I might have wished our Peg had taken another course with Pigeon-breast.

Thus to publicly drum him out of camp was a thought too hardy. However, Pigeon-breast had wrought for what he received, and I think, too, Peg was more moved by the audacious fun of the business than any darkling taste to have a vengeance, for all her word.

The General, I am minded, was of my view; it was the frolic of the thing to carry Peg away.

"Peg is young," quoth the General, amiably; "our Peg is young. What would you have? She shall be older one day and more upon dignity. What shall more bound and frisk and play than your scapegrace kitten? And yet what more gravely decorous than your cat? By Joshua's horn! on the whole, I'm glad your Pigeon-breast was brought up with a round turn."

It was one afternoon when the General came to me with a request that I seek out Noah at the Indian Queen and confer with him over the merits of a gentleman who lusted to hold a certain office.

"This individual comes to me well spoken of," said the General, "and yet I would know more of him, and that from one who has no axe to be grinded."

While I made ready for my walk to the

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

Indian Queen, the General unpouched another piece of interesting news.

"By the way," said he, "our Peg has settled on April as a time for that dinner and ball. She would have had it sooner; but she does not now need the White House for any direct aid to her arms. She will save it for the close, and make the affair a sort of celebration."

"It is a good thought," said I. "It is wiser, since she has won her way with what should be her own resources, not to subtract from that success by any full blown movement of the White House upon the scene. Mean folk would say she could not have come through without you to be her ally."

"And that is my notion, too!" coincided the General. "Peg's position is complete; the White House now would but divide her glory. We will offer her our East Room courtesies in April, and let it be for an old-time Roman triumph as when a victor returns from war. Peg well deserves a triumph; the Vice-Presidential coterie and all whom it might control have moved heaven and earth for Peg's disaster and pulled and hauled like common sailor-folk on any rope to do her harm."

"Does not April," said I, "mark an unheard-of span for your social season? I had thought it might end with Lent."

"And so it would," smiled the G
 "if now we were only Federalists like A
 and remembered the Church of Englan
 guide. This, however, is a Presbyterian
 istration; wherefore, we shall abide ne
 your Lents, but drink and dance and d
 far into spring flowers as we will."

"Being the earliest instance," add
 "when to drink and to dance and to dine
 called an evidence of Calvinism."

Noah was pen-employed over certai
 dom which should find subsequent expo
 in his paper.

"There are large money influences
 marked Noah, thoughtfully, when we had t
 a moment, "which have grown alluringly fri
 about my associate, Watson Webb. The
 offering a loan to our paper of fifty thou
 dollars. You know"—this with his sai
 air "how papers are ever in want of a
 These money folk bank on that to win us;
 haps, too, they find hope in my being a .

"And what would your associate d
 asked.

"To be frank," returned Noah, "he g
 admiring ear to this song of siren mone
 think we shall part company—Webb and

"And yet," said I, with a bent for b
 "you are ever in one kind or another l

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

emphasis on your Jewish readiness for gold. Now you see it is the Jew who can not be moved, while our Gentile, with an eye to the yellow chance, would not be found so sentimental."

"For all that," remarked Noah, "the Jew is a profound money hunter. It is but natural he should be. That cupidity, or, if you prefer, that gold-greed, has been through centuries developed as his one hope for safety. In the oppressions which have borne upon him, and which in all countries save this still bear him down, your Jew has found in money his last cave of retreat. He might bulwark himself with riches. With others, gold would mean luxury; with the Jew, it stood for life itself, and to go wanting it was to be tooth and nail about the digging of his own grave."

"And it is your theory, then," said I, "that the great need for gold which for ages was to stare the Jew in the face, became the seed of that genius, to gather which now the race is heir to?"

"Without question," said Noah. "More; since the Jew has been safe of his goods and his blood in this land of ours, and the rowels of that great need no longer lance the flanks of effort and set it to the leap, we rear a kind of Jew who owns no mighty care for money. I will find you Jews in our midst who can still be

hawks to swoop, but who have no hold to keep. They will spend you their riches or give them away like water. We shall yet rear an American Jew who has no skill to get money. Still, going back to that first thought—for it is worrying my soul like a dog—of those money influences busy with the enlistment of Webb, I am free to say that even in his worst hour your Jew would never take a bribe. He would sell neither his friend nor his principle; those were never Jewish ways of money-finding."

"Your Jew makes a stout patriot," said I. "I could want no better American than a Jew."

"Why, then," responded Noah, "there be none to whom America means so much. You, being of the strain of Saxon-Dane, would have justice in England, welcome in Russia, friendship in France. What would your Jew meet? Your Jew loves America because he loves himself; he is a patriot since he is a Jew."

"And yet," I protested, "it is no question of cool selfishness with your Jew. He is as spontaneously the patriot as any other. Take Judah Touro: whose money or whose blood was more at the beck of his country that January day at New Orleans?"

"Why, yes, that is true," said Noah. "But you should reflect: patriotism, like every other emotion—if it be a mother's love for her

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

child—has ever its first feet in selfishness. That would be the tale of Jew or Gentile the wide world round. Selfishness seems but a rough, unworthy root, but from it have flowered art, poetry, science, or what you will. The lineage of each sentiment of beauty, whether it be the tenderest charity or that self-sacrifice that lays down its life, begins with selfishness—that mighty cornerstone of the world.”

“Beware of metaphysics,” said I. “That, at least, would be our matter-of-fact General’s caution.”

“Who? the President?” Noah laughed. “I will let you in with a secret. There is only one to be more the sentimentalist than your ‘matter-of-fact General,’ and that, my friend, is yourself. However, keeping from the personal, I would still stand firm to it that selfishness is the beginning of the virtues. Those better expressions, charity and love, come by its cultivation just as the generous apple has for its forebear that bitter, thorny, sour creature, the wild crab. Now, your Jew has been vastly cultivated;”—here came Noah’s look of satire—“he has been ploughed by adversity and harrowed of oppression. Thus farmed, your Jew will produce those Judah Touroes you tell of. There were mates for Touro throughout our years of revolution. There dwelt but seven

hundred families of Jews in this land when Concord and Lexington and Bunker Hill fell forth. From Lexington until Cornwallis, those Jews were busy with their ducats and their blood for freedom. They gave millions. Old Haym Salomon alone gave six hundred thousand dollars. He was the richest of his day; he died copper poor to the obolary point of groats and farthings. At his end he said: 'I die broken and in the talons of want; but I die happy since I have lived to see civil and religious liberty established on this soil.'

Rivera, broad of shoulder, mild of eye, here drew near and made a slight motion, as one who points with his thumb, towards the tap-room of the tavern. Noah would seem instantly to understand his wordless satellite.

"Come," said Noah, eagerly, "I can show you those Catron thugs I warned you against. It may serve you to know their faces."

"I had forgotten to ask," I returned. "Has any of them gone about to molest you? I see you still safe."

"It is because I am looked on," returned Noah, lightly, "as a Jew most perilous. Those Catron five minutes at Gadsby's did me good service. Also, since I love quiet, I would have gossip give wings to it how I carry a knife,

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

The truth is, these caitiff folk mistrust me as a trap of death."

There was a rude group gathered about a table in the bar. The members were drinking rum from tin measures, and their vivid noses and features much aflame would not have said the habit was one lately taken up.

"Those be our friends," whispered Noah. "That animal with the shoulders of a buffalo, the iron jaw, and no forehead to speak of, is a prize-fighter of renown. He was brought over to be a counter-weight for Rivera. I would wager, should they come together, that my man beats him to a pumice."

The light in Noah's eyes showed no sloth of appetite for such a battle.

The rogues about the table were made uneasy by our presence. We looked them up and down at no little length, Noah with an eye of rawest insolence, enough of itself to draw resentment from an image. Noah called Rivera from where he lounged against the doorpost and held whispered converse with him touching the fellows, and all in a most apparent way of insult. But beyond a wrathful growl one might not lure them; they turned their shifty, evil eyes away, and hastily gulping the rum, shuffled from the place.

"If those ruffians are come to town for a motive of trouble," said I, "why do not they go upon their mission? They have been weeks here. Has this Catron so much money to waste?"

"Doubtless Catron has money enough," replied Noah. "Like yourself, however, I can not find reason for this stage-wait in the tragedy. I have tempted them to a rupture with my eye a score of times, but their conduct was always what you saw."

Noah went with me to the General, to reply to the latter's interest concerning the ambitious one.

"He is wise and brave and true," said Noah; "that is the worst I know of him."

"And that should be enough," said the General, decisively. "What more may one want than 'wise and brave and true?'"

"Then you care only for the man," said I, "and ask nothing of his principles of politics?"

"Added to those cardinals," laughed the General, "of 'wise and brave and true,' one would need but the other virtue of being my friend. When you say 'principles of politics,' Major, I should know what you mean. Still, with a now and then Calhoun exception, I am free to say I care only for your man and noth-

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

ing for a measure. If it were an election, now, I should vote for a good man on a bad platform rather than a bad man on a good platform."

"And why?" asked Noah. "For myself, I am not so sure."

"You will turn sure," replied the General, "if you but pause and recall your own experience. Measures are like batteries aboard ship. It is ever the man behind the measure, as it is the man behind the gun. If he be 'wise and brave and true,' good. If he be otherwise;—why, hang him and have you another man."

As I was returning alone to my workshop, I overheard the voices of Peg and Jim within the room.

"An' so, Miss Peg," Jim was saying, "as soon as ever your mammy gives Jim d'message an' that mouthful of whiskey, Jim shore lights out for you. Honey, Jim comes that fas', Jim does, he jes' natcherally leaves things on both sides of d'road. Your mammy's plumb sick, an' thar aint no sort o' doubt of it. Plumbago is what Jim allows it is."

"My mother is ill," said Peg, when I came in. "I sent your Jim down to get word from her. She wants me, and I would ask you to go with me to her if I dared."

"That should call for no desperate courage," said I.

The deep snows had been melting for many days, and, while the ground was now quite bare, it lay wet as a sponge, and the roads not to be thought of for horses. Peg's mother, however, lived but a little mile distant, and our way would lie through woodland for the most, with paths to wind in and out among the trees. These walks, being grassy, would do well enough for folk afoot.

"We must walk," said Peg, "and since that be the order, I must go back for stronger boots to fend against this wet."

When Peg returned from her own home and we would be setting forth, it was six years off her age to merely see her. For what mud and water we might meet, Peg had donned thick-soled, high-laced boots, and with these, and skirts cut short to match her boots, Peg appeared not an hour older than sixteen.

"You look like a schoolgirl," said I, in comment. "You will be now more than ever the child with me."

"'Tis a good uniform to walk in," said Peg, "and to balk mire and water."

Peg's mother was in no strait of weakened health more than stood proper with her days. But she was grown peevish and with

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

nerves on edge to see her daughter; for since rout and dinner and reception made such claim on Peg, she had not visited the good old lady as often as was her wont.

And now when we were there, the old mother would hear no soon word for our departure; we must stay to supper; Peg should cook for us, she said.

It was not without surprise that I observed how this command to turn herself a cook would fit with Peg's temper like a glove. In the first, Peg hung upon uncertainties; the paths were bad, there were mire and pool. But when told that she should cook for me, her face brightened and she was instantly moved to recall that a great moon would shine and so put those night-dangers of pool and mire to rest.

So patent stood Peg's satisfaction in her new duties that, as she would heap and heap again my plate—scarce eating a morsel herself—I was driven to ask reason.

“And you don't know?” said Peg, pausing with a new-baked tin of light-bread in her little hands—these latter white with flour. “It is because this is the first natural woman thing I've done for months. You may be very sure, watch-dog, whenever you see me bowing and scraping at a reception, or dismissing some

Pigeon-breast from my royal presence at a ball, that I would give the stockings off my feet to be busy about a fireplace instead, and cooking bread and meat for you. You see, I am so much more the woman than the lady. There is my defect."

"And was it that," said I, attacking a second steak with the fury of a farm-hand, while Peg glowed to see me dispatch it, "was it that to teach you to warn me I must be a man rather than a gentleman when I dealt with you?"

"Now I shouldn't wonder," replied Peg, going for more coffee.

This kitchen mood of Peg's—and somehow I liked it as much as ever she did—and her word for it how she preferred cookery to balls, set me to put questions as we twined along our path among the trees on homeward journey. The night, as Peg foretold when she so favored supper-getting, was full of a white radiance that one might read print by, for the air was as clear as glass and the moon both big and round.

"You were speaking as one weary," said I, "of dance and reception, and declared how you would sooner cook. Now that puts me in a fog; I should have supposed you the happiest,

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

as you should be the proudest, woman in the world."

"I said I would sooner cook for you," said Peg. "You are uncouth enough to forget that part. Or perhaps, now it was your timidity. I am proud enough, doubtless; but why, watch-dog, should you think me happy?"

"Is it not reason enough," returned I, "that you have stifled your enemies, and stand on the last summit of our society?"

"I am happy only as it makes my friends happy," returned Peg; "the good General and yourself. I would not, for my own part, waste one moment on it."

"I can not understand," said I. "That I should love nothing of drawing-rooms does not amaze me; the day is on in middle life with me and I've seen too much of grass and sky to now care for floors and frescoes. But for a woman:—I should have said her joy would be there."

"Watch-dog, I am too much the woman," said Peg; "or, since you may better understand, I'm too much the savage. I've climbed the social mountain. I stand on its summit; there is nowhere higher. And yet what will it all mean?"

"What will it not mean?" I asked.

"Watch-dog, I'll tell you what it will not mean." Peg spoke in a tone of tired earnestness. "It will not mean sympathy or love or trust. Society, as we've agreed, is like a mountain. And like a mountain, you find less and less of vegetation as you climb—fewer of the green, good virtues that stand so thickly rank in the poor valleys below. As you climb, it would turn ever barer and colder; and at the last no virtues—nothing but lichens and livid mosses. We are at the summit, watch-dog. And now what find we other than the dead cold snow? You have told me I stand on the social summit; you see I keep repeating. Do you know now what it is in my heart to do? There lies no peril of a slip; I have too much the sure foot of the ibex. Do you know what I am moved to do?—me on my high snow social peak? Why, then, dash myself into that common valley far below."

"Now, that is not our Peg who speaks," cried I, not a trifle put about by Peg's Alpine parables. "It is the talk of a tongue and means mere wildness."

"And that is it, watch-dog," returned Peg, in a way of mourning. "I am not tame; I am like the wild things that will not bear a cage. Now here; see how strange I am. I do not like women; I will not trust one with a word;

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

I must watch myself to treat them with a fair face. Then I am all to talk and go about with men. I should have been born one of those Indian girls of whom you told me. A campfire and a petticoat of buckskin, a wigwam and a husband—big and broad like you, watch-dog—to fight and to hunt for me; that would be my dream.”

There arose a rough laugh, and if my ears were true, a rum-sodden laugh. I turned my head, and there, a hundred yards to our rear, came rolling and stumbling the drunken crew whom Noah had been at pains to show me in the Indian Queen. Over my shoulder I watched them for a moment. They were in sottish glee, and would shout, and now and then troll a bar or two of some pot-house ballad.

My nature was on watch in a moment; I suspected how these ruffians would be after us. We were in a lonely strip of trees, and no folk near the spot but just ourselves—a safe theatre for villainy. I counted our roaring drunkards; there were eleven, and among them I could pick out the yard-wide shoulders of that gladiator to whom Noah had pointed.

Peg, as well as I, could see these creatures coming; but then she had not my news, and would only know them for roysterers returning from some drinking bout. I glanced at Peg; her

face was bright and free, and for all her late lamentations over society and its dead cold wastes of proper snow, mighty wide awake and vivacious. I never beheld her more brisk; in the white moonlight her picture shone out as clear as day.

Peg was on my right arm. I began to go more slowly so that those who followed should overtake us, and to push a little off the path to the right, for I would have Peg out of the midst of them when trouble fell.

As I would loiter and go with a slower foot, the eleven behind quickened their step. They came on, roaring and jesting among themselves; not together, but by twos and threes, and straggling along the path like geese. I think it was their plan to push ahead of Peg and me and bar our way; for they went lumbering and lurching by, making a rude joke to toss from tongue to tongue, but no one to so much as look on us direct until the last one came up. He would be lagging behind for a purpose, too, since he was gone on no more than a yard ahead of Peg and myself when he sings out to his fellows with an oath:

"D'ye see whom we have here? Why, here is our big lover and his light o' love—no less!"

THE SON OF THE SPANISH BULL-FIGHTER

With that, stepping before Peg, I seized the scoundrel with my left hand. It was his arm above the elbow I took hold on, and a soft snick like a snapping of the clay stem of a pipe, and the grotesque way in which the hand dangled, palm outward, showed me how I had broken the bone.

The creature's scream brought the others to his rescue. That was no loss, for it would have been their plan from the first to return and fall upon me. As they came on in a blundering file, whirling forth oaths, I took the one in my hand with a grip about his middle. Heaving him over my head, I dashed him at the others as they drew near. The villain would do beautifully as a projectile, too, for he mowed down three like a chain-shot, his boot making a fine gash in the face of one of them.

On the point of going forward to meet the others, I was stayed by a shout, loud and musical, yet much like the muffled roar of some deep-lunged animal. Then came one from the rear with the speed of an arrow at top flight. In the moonlight I could tell him for Rivera the son of that Spanish bull-fighter, running like a stag. He flashed by me; and the next moment he struck one of the roughs with his fist. It was a hammer-like blow, and that one who would stop it fell with the crash of a tree.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED.

Doubtless, since my very palms itched to be about that employment, I would have had my hands on others of the rogue crew, but I was granted no chance. Rivera poured himself against the scoundrels like a torrent. Quick, catlike, springing in and out, he smote upon two of them as with a poleaxe, and they went to the grass like folk of wood. The sound of the blows came to my ears as clearly as the click of balls in a billiard game. Beholding the thunderbolt work of Rivera, the others, losing courage, and with a concert of curses and growling cries, turned tail and ran.

There was one, however, of those who were yet upon their ignoble feet, to save himself this disgrace. When the rest ran off crying among the trees, this man would tarry; he was that wide-shouldered fighting man who was thought to match Rivera. For reasons of his own, and perhaps they were in a rude sort chivalric and to his credit, this fellow had not rushed upon us with the others, but stood at some distance looking on, arms folded

across his chest. Now, when all were down or vanished in the dark, he, with arms still folded, came slowly towards Rivera.

"Volks tells me, lad," said the fighting man as, arms still at peace, he paused within a few yards of Rivera, who would be coolly waiting for him, "volks tells me as 'ow you be summat of a boxer; and vor a certainty, you does make beef of them coves in a vorkmanlike vay—you does, upon my davy! But now, d'ye see, you settles vith me—me, Jim Burns of W'itechapel."

"Assuredly!" returned Rivera, and his deep tones, like the roll of an organ, would carry the impression of one in wondrous good humor, "I shall be most pleased to settle with you. See, you may take your time; there is no hurry."

The other, who seemed to have faith in the leisurely mood of Rivera, softly doffed coat and waistcoat, and stood in his shirt of gray cloth, trousers and shoes. Rivera similarly prepared himself; he would meet his enemy in the same light costume.

"Best to turn up your trowsers, lad," advised the fighting man, "as I does. They may 'inder your veet, else, in steppin'."

When these improvements had been

wrought, the fighting man's thought would double a new corner.

"And yet," he remarked, complainingly, "w'at's the bloomin' use? 'Ere's them coves all run away"—pointing to the last of the trio whom Rivera had beaten down, as that unworthy staggered to his feet and lurched off into the darkness—"an' no purse nor nothink to vight for. I sees no use, lad, in our puttin' hup our 'ands." This last in a grieved tone.

"But you must fight," remonstrated Rivera, in a sharp, eager fashion. "You came to this town to beat me. Will you now let yourself be stopped and never a blow? Are you afraid?"

"Me, afeerd?" retorted the fighting man, fiercely, his little eyes like sparks. "W'y, lad! th' cove doant stan' in leather as I'm afeerd on. Me, a fourteen stoner, leery? An' of only one? Well, I likes that!" The disgust of the fighting man was unmistakable.

It was a queer position, this waiting to be spectator of a fist duel between these game-some ones, but I did not feel free to leave until the thing should end. When the fighting man, arms crossed, came pacifically up, I would have been for going forward to lay hold on him, but Rivera, with a manner like a prayer and as

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

he who seeks a favor for his soul, besought me to withstay my hand.

"Don't," pleaded Rivera, but never taking his gaze from the man, "don't; he is mine."

With that, giving over whatever of right I may have owned to the fellow, I went to Peg where she stood on a little knoll among the deeper shadows of the woods.

"I should take you to safety at once," said I, in explanation of my loitering lack of expedition, "but I would see Rivera through this."

"I do not want to go," replied Peg, gazing the while as with a kind of fascination.

Peg's face wore a flush of excitement; this I could tell even in the shadows, and her words had a great ring of interest. I did not remark on the strangeness of it, nor frame a rebuke for that she should love to look on while gladiators fought. I, myself,—for I confess to a mighty lust of strife,—was hot to see what might follow, and it came to me as quite the thing that Peg should share my feeling. It was the savage in her blood, as the General would have said; but, a trifle strung of the fracas and with the wolf in me at full stretch, I felt no amazement, but only sympathy for Peg's sentiment.

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

the other's consolation, I thought, "I'm an Irish-Jew."

"An Irish-Jew!" returned the other, with a note of admiration. "Now that's better. lad; Irish on Jew makes a bitter cross for the ring. But all the same, it's a shame vor me to be 'ere millin' by moonlight in voreign parts, an' never no purse nor ropes nor nothink, an' no 'igh toby blokes to referee or even 'old a vatch. An' me, mind you, as should be champion."

"Why do you say that?" asked Rivera, in a hunger of boyish curiosity to know how honorable the conquest was he went about. "Of what should you be champion?"

"Hengland, lad, w'at else!" said the other. "It's all on account of an accident that I beant. I vights vith Big Tom Brown of Bridgenorth, I does; an' Tom, 'e naps it on the bugle so 'ard 'e's all vor bleedin' to death. An' vith that, the beaks is vor puttin' me on a transport to go to New South Wales, when I moseys down to Bristol an' goes aboard ship an' comes over 'ere. If I could 'ave stayed at 'ome, I'd a-beat Bendigo by now, an' been the champion 'stead of 'e. 'Owever, volks must do the best vith w'at they has, so hup vith your mauleys, lad. Time!"

More than once I had seen our rough keel-boatmen of the Cumberland indulge, when soaked of rum, in what they termed a "rough and tumble," but this, when Rivera and the fighting man of Whitechapel stood up to one another, was the first time I was to observe how ones trained to fisticuffs expound the game. My keel-boatmen fought in a biting, clawing, gouging, wildcat way that was a climax of brutality and blood. This would not be the story of Rivera and his foe, for their labors were as cleanly accurate as a cameo, while yet the blows they dealt would have shaken an oak to its core.

As the fighting man of Whitechapel exclaimed "Time!" Rivera and he drew cautiously over to one another. I could see how each kept his left hand well forward and his left foot advanced to bear it company, while the right foot was planted with firm squareness, and no spring nor give to the knee, but the leg stiff to prop against a blow. The right arm would be used, too, more as a guard to save the body, but with hand in reserve clenched like iron to deal a finishing blow whenever the vanguard or left hand had opened the way with the enemy.

Rivera and the fighting man sparred carefully and as folk who would test each other. And yet, while there abode with each a wealth

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

of care and a saving determination to be sure of guards and parries, there was no slowness. They paced about and before one another like two fighting panthers, each as ready as leventash to have advantage of a weakness in the other's defence.

To me it was like a picture of motion, and a sense of delight coursed in my veins. I was so held, too, I did not once cast my eyes on Peg, who with her hand on my arm was crowded snug to my side and—as I remembered later, when I would learn the reason of pain for it—leaning upon me with all her slight weight. No, so rapt was my gaze for the moment that I never once looked nor thought on Peg; and that, let me tell you, is a deal to say, since such was our witch-child's sweet hold on me I could number you few moments which did not find her in the fond foreground of my fancy.

Of the suddenest, the fighting man fell upon Rivera like a storm. But it would be of no avail. The blows he dealt, Rivera caught upon his forearm; and that with so careless a confidence it would appear to sting the other. In the last of the melee the fighting man, stepping swiftly near, struck a slashing, swinging blow that should have cracked a skull had one gotten in the way. Rivera leaped back, light

as a goat and as sure. As the big fist swept harmlessly on its journey, Rivera laughed as at a jest.

Our fighting man, however, would own to no turn for humor. The laugh hurt him like the lash of a rawhide. Without pause or space, and with a sharpness that stood a marvel in one so bulky, he repeated the smashing swing, but with the other hand. Rivera did not spring backward; indeed, he had no time, even had he carried the inclination. But it would be all one with Noah's protege, for he ducked his head like a wild fowl who dives from the flash of a gun. Again the blow passed without scathe; only, this time, over Rivera's cunning head. The force of the swing half turned the fighting man; with that, and not striking him, but, as though in a spirit of derision, pushing with open hand, and at the same moment locking, as wrestlers would say, the enemy's ankle at the back with his foot, Rivera tumbled our huge gentleman over on the grass. He fell a-sprawl, but with no hurt to himself, and all as easy as delivering a bale of goods at one's door.

The fighting man got slowly to his feet. Then he looked on Rivera with an eye of puzzled discontent.

"Be you playin' vith me, lad?" said he at last. This in a manner of injury.

Rivera made no retort other than his quiet laugh that told rather of pleasure than amusement. Clearly, Rivera was in enjoyment's very heart and his cup would come to him crowned with high delight.

The fighting man went now and leaned against a tree to breathe himself. Presently he awoke again; I could tell by the way of it how his regard for Rivera had been augmented.

"'Ow 'eavy be you, lad?" he asked, his breath still coming in short, deep puffs.

"One hundred and eighty-two," said Rivera.

"An' w'at would that be in stone?"

"Thirteen."

"D'ye see now!" exclaimed the fighting man, dejectedly, "an' that should be my veight. Only I'm a stone above; but it's fat an' does me 'arm. You bees a 'ard un, young master, an' I doant know as 'ow I can do vor you, an' I'm not trained. 'Owever, I shall try all I c'n. Time!"

For the second occasion the two stood forth against one another in the middle of the moonlighted glade; and again the fighting man was the aggressor. It would be still the same old tale; Rivera foiled him and beat him

back upon himself at every angle of his effort. It was like a tune to simply see Rivera; for his eye and hand and foot worked all together in a fashion of harmony like the notes in music.

But the dour end was on its way, and it fell upon the victim like the bursting of a bomb. The fighting man had stepped a pace backward following a rally in which he won nothing save chagrin. As he retreated, Rivera would seem to swoop on him. It was a feint—an artifice; it had for result, however, the drawing of the fighting man again upon Rivera. Straight from his shoulder, and by way of retort or counter to the feint, the fighting man sent his left hand for Rivera's face. It would be the situation wrought for. Rivera, with feet firm set, moved his head aside so that the blow met nothing, but whistled across his left shoulder. Then his left hand, arm as stiff as a bar of iron, met the oncoming foe, carried forward with the momentum of his own wasted blow, flush in the mouth. I heard the sound of it, and saw it jolt the other's head back as though he had run against the pole of a baggage wagon. The vicious emphasis of it shook his senses in their source; before he could rally, Rivera dealt him a smashing blow above the heart with his right hand; it was a

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

buffet like the kick of a pony and one that would have splintered a rock!

The fighting man fell forward senseless on the grass; the moonlight played across his face and tiny streams of blood were running thinly from his nose and ears. He lay without motion or quiver, and, after considering him a bit with all the warmth an artist might bestow upon a masterpiece, Rivera turned loungingly to Peg and myself where we were viewing proceedings from our knoll. There was a dancing light in Rivera's eyes such as comes to a child pleased of a new toy. As he stood before us, a smile about his mouth, he stretched upward on his toes, and raised his hands above his head, his vast chest arching and swelling the while like a drum, and the muscles of his neck writhing until they fairly burst the collar of his gray shirt and sent a button buzzing into the darkness.

"He wasn't fit," said Rivera, recovering himself from the muscle-stretching, and beaming amiably; "the fellow was not in condition." Here he indicated with a nod the prostrate fighting man, still stunned and bleeding where he fell.

"Have you killed him?" said Peg, with a deep breath. The girl was drawn as tense as harpstrings. "I hope he will not die."

"Oh, no," declared Rivera; "he will not die. In two minutes, or at the most in ten, he will be well again. If he do not come to his wits in ten minutes, I shall help him with water on his face."

"We have to thank you," said I; "you are a brave fellow to match yourself against a horde."

"I was told always to follow them," said Rivera. "I have been at their heels for weeks. But they would do nothing until to-night." Rivera's manner when he related the long-drawn indolence of his quarry and those weeks wherein they would "do nothing," tasted of disappointment. "However,"—this as though a wrong had been repaired,—"they got to work at last, so after all it ends right."

Now I walked across to my moaning one of the broken arm, who still sat nursing his injuries.

"Why would you rob us?" I asked.

"Rob you?" he repeated between moans, and with a startled air. "No one wanted to rob you."

"You and your gang," said I—for this was the story I meant to tell, if made to tell one of the night's turmoil—"you and your gang are footpads. You would have robbed us. Should

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

you be in the town to-morrow, I will find you a place of bars and bolts."

Certainly, these brawling creatures were not highwaymen, but only ruffians whom that Catron had hired for I know not what particular purpose of revenge. But the wretch's exclamation, "Here is our big lover and his light o' love!" alarmed me for Peg. I would not have that tale told to thus bring forth her name. It were better to drive these fellows off and have an end of it. That was my thought in calling them footpads and talking of attempts to take a purse.

The argument of robbery put a measure of life into the moaning one; he got upon his feet and made ready to betake himself to scenes of better safety.

"My arm is broken," said he, whiningly, and as hoping I might feel a sympathy.

"It should have been your neck, instead," said I, in no wise sympathetic. "And so it would, had I owned the forethought to have had you by the throat rather than your arm. You might better depart, sirrah; else I may yet wring round your head, for my spirit is hard laid siege to by some such twisting impulse."

That was enough; our moaning one made

shift to get himself away through the trees and with not a trifle of expedition.

"And now, what will you do?" I asked Rivera.

"Oh, I shall remain here," replied Rivera, simply, "and wait for him to return to his wits." Here he pointed to his enemy. "He is a very bold, strong man, and perhaps when he has recovered and rested he may want to fight again." This last sentence was vibrant of a dim hope.

Turning from me, Rivera brought a little snow-water in his hat from a hollow where it had collected during the thaws and began to sprinkle the face of his fighting friend from Whitechapel. Leaving him upon these labors of grace and philanthropy—albeit I believe the thought uppermost in his innocent heart was that the smitten one, when duly revived, might declare for another battle—I again sought Peg. I went to her something stricken of my conscience and uneasy with the fear of having neglected my duties as her cavalier. I found her sitting upon the little knoll, her foot drawn under her, and she nursing her right ankle in a marked peculiar way.

"Was not Rivera grand!" exclaimed Peg, as I came up. "And you, too, watch-dog: I shall never forget the picture of you"—Peg

spoke in a bubbling way and as though she overflowed of ecstasy—"as you flung that crying creature in the faces of the others. It was a moment of nobility; I shall never miss it from my memory."

"And what has gone wrong with your foot?" said I, for from her crouching position and the manner in which she would caress her ankle I was struck with the fear of some disaster; nor was I wrong.

"It is my ankle," said Peg, and I could notice how her brow was wrung with the pain of it. "As I climbed upon this knoll in the first of it, my foot turned under me. I did not observe until just now how sharp was the injury."

That was the story; Peg's ankle, for all her strong high boots, had won to a grievous wrench.

"Now that I've nothing else to think on," said Peg, biting her lips to smother a cry, "it gives me torture like a knife."

"Your ankle," said I, "is becoming swollen; and that in those tight-laced boots, let me say, should mean a torment of the inquisition."

My years in the field had made me deft of strains and bruises and, when need pressed, even broken bones and wounds more threaten-

ing. I straightway knelt down before and began with care to make loose her gear. What a little boot it was! "One-half" was the size, so Peg told slipped the boot off with mighty tenderness and put it in the pocket of my coat.

"And I'm very proud of my small watch-dog," said Peg, a smile struggling through the lines of pain which pinched the corner of her mouth. "Yes, I am proud of my foot. Why not? It came to me from the same wareroom of nature where you got your great heart and that arm of might, and the good General found his honesty and courage. I've as much right to be proud of my foot as you folk of those attributes of excellence I've named."

Peg was striving to laugh down her pain with these compliments for her foot; I told her, moreover, that she was a far cry from success, for her pretty argument ended in a sob as a pang more than commonly crushed her poor ankle in its vise.

Gently I chafed Peg's foot; and while that would do little good, it served to soothe and modify the instant agony. Meanwhile I told her how I would carry her home in my arms so soon as the first grief of the sprain had chafed away.

"Carry me in your arms!" cried Peg.

"What else?" said I. "You can't walk."

So, then, Peg made no more demur; and presently, when her foot was well enough, I lifted her and started through the woods. It would be no more than just carrying a child; and since Peg put her arm about my neck, and helped to keep her place, my own arms even failed of the full burden of her. It was an easy task at any rate, and if you will be told it, a sweet task, too; this walk with Peg held close, and her hair, which had been caught up with a comb, to fall down and sweep across my throat and face. I could taste a fragrance in that hair like a breath from the Isles of Spice—a perfume that fair set my bosom in a flame.

It might have been the half of a mile that I carried Peg; however, I had no knowledge of it, whether for the distance or the time, but only of a bliss that was like a radiance, and a heart-willingness to go on and on and on to the world's end.

It was Peg herself who at last would bring me to my senses; for I was pressing forward as void of speculation as a drunken man to march through the crowded avenues of the town, Peg on my breast and my two arms holding her tight like a treasure.

"Put me down, watch-dog," whispered

Peg, for her mouth was at the very door of my ear, "put me down. I can stand well enough. Have me down, and let us wait here until we can call a carriage. It would be a perplexing sight to quiet folk were you to go striding through the streets with such a burden."

With a sigh to end so dear a toil, I had Peg down carefully; and there she stood, and as she would say it, "like a chicken on one foot." It fell our luck that one of those carriages of public livery, whereof there was plentiful store in the town, drove by about this time. I called to it, and placing Peg therein, soon had her at her own door.

"I am mighty sorry for the sprain," said I, as I lifted Peg from the carriage.

"Are you?" quoth Peg, with an archness that would almost cloak the pain. "Now is that gallant of you, watch-dog?" Then, making a mock of my words and manner: "I am mighty glad for the sprain. Only, I could wish my mother lived farther away. I never knew how close she was till now."

As the winter wore into spring, the talk to swell and grow was of Nullification. Calhoun's state of South Carolina had laid aside disguise, and while nothing worse than speeches, with now and then a doughty resolution, were in-

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

dulged in, these showed ever of that rebellious sort that waited only to be turned into action to become sufficient treason. The General sat brooding and watching the drift; his plans of men and rifles and ships laid like a trap, and set to snap up in the jaws of them the first traitor to be afoot for that secession the Calhoun clique would claim was each state's holy right. Altogether, the days were on a strain, and hair turned white and folk went pale of the cheek with the worry of the question "How will this ferment end?"

The one query of most concern related to the General. What would he do? To what line would his resentment travel? Folk knew how he was against Secession and States Rights and Nullification, or whatever the name might be wherewith iniquitous rebellion pleased itself for the moment, but would he treat these sins of politics as stark treason? Would he fall back on courts and hangman's ropes in dealing with them?

No one might tell. The General, after he made himself plain with that Rhetz who came to spy out his resolves, would say no farther word. Ones in interest might go wrong or go right; as for the General himself, he would light no more lamps.

"Have I not told them what I will do?" cried the General. "Must I be out of my bed o' nights to tell them again? No; let these would-be treason-mongers proceed as they see their way. Besides, to hang the right man now may save the lives of later thousands."

This was said for my ear alone; to no other would the General so much as give one look of yea or nay.

While the General would be the sphinx over Nullification, prudent rebellionists argued for a waiting strategy. There would dawn the anniversary of Jefferson's birthday; there would come that dinner at the Indian Queen; the General's conduct if not his words on that occasion must surely tell his story of decision. Should he remain away, they would know he feared to face them. Should he be present, they would try him with toasts of treason and mark his manner under fire. They would ask him for a sentiment; what he said or did in retort might give them every needed glimpse. Decidedly, it was wise to wait; Secession would keep; in the name of one's neck and a rope, proceedings might better be stayed until those toast experiments on the General were given a chance.

The General was well enough pleased with this uncertainty whereof he now found himself

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

the hub. He guarded his words, left every man to grope out his own path for himself, and the days coursed on with the unanswered question of the General's determination in their mouths. Thus dwelt the business on that day of April from the developments whereof so much was to be hoped.

For the prior space of eight weeks or more the General had said little to me of that banquet planned of nullifiers to uncover him on those topics of perilous statecraft. Seeing his taste to be mysterious, I would say nothing to the General, whether to ask a question or give a hint of conduct, but left him to himself. I knew what he would do ; and for the detail of how he would go upon its execution, I was the more willing to miss a forecast of it since I have a weakness for the unknown and am as prone as any other to save up surprise for myself. Wherefore, I would have the General make his own maps and design his own ambuscades, and leave me in blindness of them. On that April morning I owned no sure knowledge that the General would even attend the banquet, to say naught of what he might do or say if ever he once were there.

It was the middle of the afternoon when the General looked into my workshop, pipe in mouth, and said with a twinkle in his eye, a

twinkle that was both mirthful and hard: "Major, I take it you and I will go to that dinner to-night?"

The General would put this as though it were a question; not because it stood unsettled and unsaid as a thing resolved, but it was the way of him when he would pay you a compliment to pretend a consultation, and coax you into a council, hoping you would advise those things he was already resolved upon like iron and which were often half performed.

For all I was aware of this talent on the General's part to be polite, and was certain, when he glanced in through my door, that both of us would be of the band about those Indian Queen tables, I was quick to humor his whim for the mysterious and undecided. I looked up as one who turns a new proposal on the wheel of his thoughts.

"It is my idea," said I at last, with the air of a man who likes the notion's flavor, "that your presence would work for good. I should say we might better go. We may count the enemy, and that at least should be something."

"You are right," returned the General. "We will go; and I think, too, it might be good policy to let the foe count us."

The Indian Queen was a crowded hostelry

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

that night. The halls and waiting rooms of the tavern were thronged of eminent ones. Some were present to attend the Jefferson dinner; others casually for gossip and to hear the news.

As the General and I would be going up the stair, my eye was caught by the heavy shoulders and lion face of Webster coming down.

"There's too much Secession in the wind for me," remarked Webster, as the General asked if he were going away.

"You did not leave the Senate for that," responded the General. "If Secession be here, it's a reason for remaining."

Webster shrugged his big shoulders and went on.

As I gazed at the group—waiting, they were, for the opening of the banquet hall—I met many a great face. Among those about the stair-head and in the rooms beyond were Colonel Johnson of Kentucky, tall of form, grave of eye, he who slew Tecumseh; Benton, big, pompous, wise but with a bottomless conceit; the lean Rufus Choate, eloquent and sound; Corwin, round, humorous, with a face of ruddy fun; White, the dignified, in the Senate from my own state of Tennessee; Hill, gray and lame, the General's friend in New

Hampshire; Noah, my Hebrew with red hair; Van Buren, Peg's "good little secretary" of state; Vaughn, the British minister; the quick-eyed Amos Kendall, with Blair by his side; the recreant Duff Green, now wholly for Calhoun; Calhoun himself, pale, scholarly and fine; Huygens, that ministerial tubby personage, gingleary and dull; Krudener, the Russian; Eaton, easy, florid, urbane; Branch and Berrien and Barry and Ingham and the reckless Marcy.

The dinner was spread. The decorations were studied in their democracy. Hundreds of candles from many-armed iron branches blazed about the plain walls of the room and made the light of day. For the rest, the hall was hung with flags. The stars and stripes, to be a centerpiece, was draped about a portrait of Jefferson just to the rear of the place where Lee of Virginia, who was to preside, would sit. Extending around the four sides of the room were festooned the flags of the several states.

With peculiar ostentation, and next to the national colors, flowed the banner of South Carolina, with its palmetto and rattlesnake—Calhoun's emblem.

"Do you see it?" said the General in a low tone, as we approached our places, "do

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

you see Calhoun's flag? That serpent may rattle but it must not strike."

"And if it strike?"

"If it strike, it dies."

Profusion and elegance were displayed in the arrangements, with none of that long-drawn foolishness of courses so dear to Whigs and Federals and other imitators of an English nobility. Black servants came and went to shift one's plate and knife, or to aid in carving at the call of a guest. At hopeful intervals along the tables reposed huge sirloins and smoking rounds of beef; there were quail pies and chickens fried and turkeys roasted; there stood pies of venison and rabbit and pot-pies of squirrels; soups and fishes and vegetables; boiled hams and giant dishes of earthenware holding baked pork and beans; roast suckling pigs and each with a crab-apple in its mouth. There were corn breads and flour breads and pancakes rolled with jellies; sideboards upheld puddings—Indian, rice and plum—quaking custards, and scores of kindred dainties. Everywhere bristled ranks and double ranks of bottles and decanters, and a widest range of drinks, from whisky to wine of the cape, were at one's call. There, too, stood wooden bowls of salads on side tables, supported of weighty cheeses; and to close in the

flanks were pies, mince and pumpkin and apple, with final coffee, and slim long pipes with tobacco of Trinidad for folk who would smoke.

Before we were seated, and while we stood to our places, the sentiment was proposed :

“The memory of Thomas Jefferson.”

The toast was drunk in silence ; all could agree on Jefferson ; and then with clatter of knife and fork, the thirsty clink of glasses, and the murmurous hum of conversation over all, the work of the night commenced.

As the moments roved on, Nullification and Secession became so much the open objects of many present, and were withal so loosely in the common air, that sundry gentlemen—more timorous than loyal, perhaps—made excuses and withdrew.

The General's presence was a plain surprise to more than one ; they could not construe it. For himself, he carried it off as though his being there were the most expected of possible things. The General sat on the right hand of the presiding Lee. I was, myself, to the General's right hand. Opposite was Calhoun with that Calhoun triangle of the cabinet, Berrien, Branch and Ingham. The quartet got on most beamingly. The General, as we

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

came up, rendered them a sweeping bow which they might share among them.

"Calhoun," whispered the General, indicating the Vice-President with a nod, "is, you see, openly claiming his half of my cabinet. I'll startle him some day by making him a present of the three."

An hour passed on; the banquet reached that glass-and-bottle stage which Noah anticipated. There were a round score of regular toasts; each would smell of secession, while the speeches were even more malodorous of that villainy.

I, with a hundred others, was narrowly watching the General, and, well as I knew him, I wondered at the calmness wherewith he maintained himself. This man who had a genius for anger, who went head-free into each debate, who offered you his last thoughts in an unrestricted stream of talk, would now be as impassive as marble. The General, throughout these wordy treasons of speech and toast, showed cold and stern and master of a dignity that became both himself and the exalted character of his station.

The hour was hurrying towards the late. Calhoun glanced across at the General; there was a questioning uneasiness in his look. Evidently the urgent moment was at hand.

Calhoun offered a slip of paper to Lee, presiding, and whispered a word.

"The Vice-President proposes a toast," cried Lee.

There fell a stillness, laughter died and talk was hushed. The Chairman read:

"The Federal Union. Next to our liberty, the most dear. May we all remember that it can only be preserved by respecting the rights of the States, and distributing equally the benefits and the burden of the Union.'"

That stillness of death continued, marked and profound. Folk strained and craned at both the General and Calhoun as do ones who would observe the effect of a shot. There were eyes replete of interrogation, and if one must have it truly told, defiance, to be peculiarly turned upon the General.

For his part, the General never wore a loftier look. He scribbled a quick line and gave it to the Chairman.

"The President offers a toast." Then solemnly, as one who feels its import:

"THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED.'"

The General's glance was on Calhoun, as pointed as a sword. His eye was fierce with a sort of gray fury like the eye of some fighting eagle. Calhoun for a moment gave him

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

look for look; then his glance fell, his face whitened, he would seem to shrink and sear and wither before the man of fire. It was as though he saw the future's danger, or felt some gallows prophecy thereof. In the end he sat like one under a blackness of shadow.

The General it was who broke the spell. Pushing back, he arose, and bowing to the Chairman who still sat with that toast of menace in his hand he began moving towards the door. His head was lifted, and he bore himself as should one who flings a gauntlet to the world. Openly, obviously, defiantly, he set his heel on Secession's head in the midst of Secession's champions.

Pausing, the General swept those present, letting his look of challenge rest on each one in his turn. It was as though he questioned them: "Where, now, is your courage?"

There was none to retort to him. Folk scented peril on him as cattle smell in the wind the unborn storm.

"The Federal Union. It must be preserved." The General, as though to call a last attention, repeated his toast. Then, with burning eye laid full upon Calhoun, and thinking, doubtless, on Overton and Crockett and Houston and Dale and Coffee and those riflemen in hunting shirts and leggings, and on

the ships and Scott and Castle Pinckney, he added: "And it shall be preserved."

It was the moment pregnant and mighty; the moment when one man foiled a plot to stampede history itself, and calmed and turned and drove the herd of events in a right national direction for the Union and to fields of quiet peace. Treason's heart and Treason's hand were palsied with a toast of seven words, when now the words came wedded with the grim, relentless courage that would die or make them true.

The galleries about the big room were filled with women looking on, Peg among the others. When the General and I were again at the White House, late as stood the hour, we found Peg waiting. I never saw a being more given over to fire than was our Peg.

"Was he not noble?" cried Peg, when she would have me alone for a moment. "Was he not grand? I would give my life if for one hour I might be a man, and be a man like that."

And yet for all the plain sureness of that toast, and the General's looks of decision which were sent to be its escort, the rebel-lionists would ask a further sign. They sent the insinuating Rhetz to call upon the General. That was the next morning.

THE FEDERAL UNION: IT MUST BE PRESERVED

The politic Rhetz presented himself, and the General met him with a manner of studied distance. He would have the visitor to know how he held him for no friend. This was meant to give the General's words more weight, since the other would understand that he stood upon guard and spoke nothing he did not intend to carry out.

"Mr. President," said Rhetz, suavely deferential, "I go back to my home to-morrow. Have you any message for your South Carolina friends?"

"Yes," returned the General, with his cold eye on the questioner, "yes, I have a message for my friends of South Carolina." The words were coming with a slow emphasis like a sentence of death. "Their state is a part of the Union, and a part of the Union it shall remain. You may tell them, if one South Carolina finger be raised in defiance of this government, that I shall come down there; and once I'm there, I'll hang the first man I lay hands on to the first tree I can reach."

CHAPTER XV

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG.

Now when the General's toast at that banquet in the Indian Queen had gone abroad, it would have the effect of a warning, each man taking it home. A mighty silence fell upon States Rights; the foxes of Nullification found their dens, and were to be noticed for a sudden absence from one's eye and ear where but the day before with their presence and their yelpings they would fill both.

It will have a strange look, but it was the General, himself, who of all folk fostered a distrust of his course.

It was to Noah and me he one day told this. Noah mentioned the vast silence of a voiceless conservatism which had fallen upon that movement of Secession, late so reboant and rampant.

"And yet," said the General, "the story of the country will at last show me wrong."

"Will you say how?" asked Noah. "Surely, you do not doubt the common need of a union between the States, and one strong enough to defy the caprice or the ambition of a clique?"

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

"My sentiment for the Union," said the General, "has suffered no modification, and it is because I stand for union and would die for union, that I am not sure of the wisdom of that toast of mine. It would have been better to stand aloof, and let Secession go the length of treason. Had I held to such a course, perhaps as many as one hundred might have answered for the crime with their lives. But the question would have been settled; the dispute would have been made *res adjudicata* and the future forever freed of that struggle. Now the serpent is only bruised, not killed; in years to follow yours and mine it will revive in rebellion and may yet crush the country in its folds."

"I can not think you are right," said I, for I was having part in the conversation with the others; "I am no judge, or you have closed the door against this Nullification."

"Ay!" responded the General, "closed but not locked the door. It should have been barred with a gibbet. Folk are not taught by threats but by example. Had I stayed myself until the leaders for Secession went so far they were hanged for it, that would have meant the end. Now the business is deferred; the country will yet be forced to fight a civil war and wade knee-deep in blood to save itself."

"Is it," asked Noah, curiously, "is it now you first hold these views?"

"They are not new," returned the General; "I owned them from the beginning. But I lacked the hardihood to act on them. I grow old; I have been in my hour the instrument by which so much blood has been shed that in my grey age I shrink from more. That toast was devised to save myself from spilling further blood; I was thinking on myself when I framed it and not of those black ones who would do treason. Its great purpose was to save me from becoming their executioner."

"Now your feeling is mine too," observed Noah, shaking a thoughtful head. "The seed of the whole trouble is slavery; while that exists, the certain chance of civil war stands open."

"And how would one be rid of it?" demanded the General, passionately. "Washington was against slavery, Jefferson was against it, Franklin was against it, every great one whose trowel employed itself in laying the foundations of our government was against it, and yet there to-day it lives. They could not cope with slavery; how, then, shall we?"

"It existed in the North," said Noah, "and it was wiped out."

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

"The slaves were few in the North," responded the General; "as chattels they made but a slim fraction of that region's riches. Moreover, slavery did not pay a Northern profit. It is easy, when there is money loss, to abandon the cause of that loss. But conditions within the present boundaries of slavery show otherwise. The slave's cost of keep is less, his months of labor more in number, and he is not winter-killed with maladies of the lungs. Moreover, your slave makes a fairer unit of labor in rice savannahs and cotton fields, where a plantation carries thousands of acres, than he did where land was more divided and a farm of a hundred and sixty acres the common holding of a man. In short, the slave spins that money profit for the South which was lacking in the North. That fact of profit—the greed of men—will meet folk who would free the slave and make you a mighty difference."

"And still," said Noah, "slavery should be stricken down."

"To that I agree," remarked the General, "but again I ask you, How? Certain of our New England radicals, when they shout for Abolition, cry 'Down with slavery!' as lightly as one should say: 'Marry! swallow a strawberry.' When a man is in the upper story of a burning house he does not hurl himself from

a window, he descends by the stair. Let us, when now we be ablaze over slavery—for it is that, as you say, to lie at the bottom of this whole movement of States Rights—let us grope cautiously until we find the safe stairway of escape.”

“It is not so clear to my mind,” said I, for the spirit to lecture, excited by example, began to move within me, “that slavery is so bad for the blacks. One must have account for a difference of race. You would not insist that a deer tear a prey with his teeth and howl on some hill of midnight like a wolf. It has been the never-flagging mistake of government to deal with the Indian as though he were white, and enforce pale-face conditions upon him. It would be as rife of error to proceed with the negro as though he were white or could work out a white man’s destiny. Make the black man free, and I tell you he will be as helpless as a ship ashore on the instant.”

“To better the black,” said the General, “is not my argument; I am against slavery to better the white man. When I seek to destroy slavery, it is the master I would free, and not the slave.”

Just what the General would intend by this last I had no opportunity to discover, for

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

the zealous Jim was heard at the door, ushering in our Peg.

"Never mind, Miss Peg," I could hear Jim say, in a way of patronizing reassurance, and evidently in combat of some suggestion of Peg's that she would defer her appearance among us, "never mind about d'Marse Major an' d'Marse Gen'ral an' that red-head Jew gentleman argufyin'. That don't count for nothin'; they're allers at it, night an' day, argufyin' away like they aint got a minute to live, and nothin' to never come of it. Never mind 'em, Miss Peg; you-all jes' trapse right along in an' declar' your urrent."

With Peg's coming, Noah made polite expedition to retire; nothing one might do or say would serve to keep him. He who could look a man in the eye and stand knee to knee with him for life or death, feared a woman as though she were a ghost and fled from the mere sight of her.

"I am somewhat abashed," said Peg, "to think of the disturbance I have caused, and that I drive away your visitor." This to the General. "Why did you not make him stay? I shall never forget my debt to him; and I'm glad, too, he is so much your favorite."

"Noah puts us all in his debt," said the General. "To me he is the man remarkable;

fine, high, yet bold and quick, there will be no one to take his place when he is gone."

Peg's purpose was to tell the General—for he had asked the question in a little note that morning—how she should like the dinner and that East Room dance he offered, on the next evening but one.

"Is not the time too short?" asked the General. "Forty-eight hours would seem no mighty space for folk to make themselves prepared. They may own other engagements."

"There will be no engagements," said Peg. "The season is quite at an end; the Redsticks, as you christened them, closed their defeated doors six weeks ago, and for our own side, we only continued our receptions two weeks longer to show how we remained masters of the field. There will stand nothing in the way; and as for space to be ready in, why, then, folk don't need hours, but only minutes, when the invitation is from the White House."

"Let us say the day following to-morrow, then," said the General. "It shall be for your victory, child, and to celebrate it. Also, since the losers as well as the victors have proper place in a triumph, and, again, because it will look like the olive branch and an expression of peace, we will bid both friend and foe to this

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

merrymaking, and mark it with as wide a good feeling as our opponents will accept."

Peg's dinner, as dinners go, was a creature of magnificence, with Peg, beautiful as a moss-rose, at the General's right, and Dolly Madison's own silver—massy, and, as the women said, "gorgeous,"—to glisten on the white napery. The General's wide-flung invitations were as widely accepted; and not alone the Van Burens and the Krudeners and the Vaughns, but the Calhouns and the Berriens and the Branches, and all of the sept of Nullification, were there, as though to put down any surmise of sulky fear for themselves to be the offshoot of that conflict of the toasts. Even the frivolous Pigeon-breast was with us undismayed; albeit he practiced a forbearance touching Peg, and never once after the first formalities so far forgot his caution as to be near enough to that sparkling lady to court the awful hazard of her glance.

There came but one clash beneath my notice, and that would feed my humor. Houston was just come into town, as rude and tangled a gentleman in every politer technicality as the bears of his native woods. With him for his table-mate he bore away the wife of Ingham of the Treasury. Houston guarded his prize to her place with a ferocious backwoods vigilance as though it were indeed the enemy's coun-

try and they in peril of some Indian ambuscade with each new room they entered. The lady, with a tact as crude as Houston's knowledge of the drawing-room, perceiving the savageries of her protector, would be prompt to establish herself as directress of his manners. Poor Houston suffered more than once the humiliation of the lady's counsel, given in a high, obvious voice, and with the manner of one who corrects a novice dull to the confines of despair.

The rupture befell over fish and when a portion of delicate pompano was placed before the headlong Houston.

"That is not the fish fork," cautioned the lady in a whisper so loud it bred a smile on thirty faces either side of her; "that is not the fish fork; here, take this."

"By Satan's hoofs, madam!" exclaimed the wrathful Houston, whose long-stifled resentment would now be in the saddle, at the same time brandishing the huge trident he had somehow gotten hold on; "by Satan's hoofs! keep your fish forks for whom you will. For myself, I'll eat this catfish with my saber if I have the mind."

Later I heard the distempered lady confide to a neighbor how Houston was "an untaught brute," while that hurt hero told me on his

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

word as a man that for those several hours he was in her company, he had less of ease than at the Horseshoe where he was given four wounds.

The East Room, when agile ones would dance was brilliant in white and gold and crystal chandeliers, with floor of water-soaked oak so polished it reflected the gay dresses like a looking-glass, and so slippery that clumsy ones, like myself, went gingerly about it in terror for their bones.

Peg was as glorious as a star, and to me never more lovely, albeit my coral on her bosom may have had somewhat to do with that. And to see her so bowed to and flattered was like a perfume; for it looked as though the foe would forego those old-time tactics of distance and averted gaze, and that a new word was abroad in Peg's behalf. There came no one to more emphasize his courtesy or show more attentive in what might do Peg honor than the Vice-President himself, and with him were the members of that cabinet triumvirate who had cast in their narrow lots with him. Even the stately Mrs. Calhoun would be gracious in a far-off sort, while the ladies Berrien and Branch relaxed from a former frigidity, and if not torrid, were at all events of the temperate zone when the etiquette of the floor would bring Peg and them in contact. As for the vigorous Madam

Ingham, she was so overcome of her labors in elevation of Houston that following dinner she could do nothing but repose herself. However, for so much as she remained in the picture, she beamed affably in a fat, vermilion way, and her red face was like the setting sun.

The male Ingham, being in prodigious fettle, would fain waddle onto the treacherous floor with Peg in his hand for a dance; for Ingham was sensibly exalted of his valor since Eaton, whom he held in fear, was not present, but off in Baltimore on some long-drawn duty about new rifles—meant, I fear me, for Nullifiers, should their pot of treason over-boil. I will say this of Ingham, however: for all his rotund uncouthness, he went through that dance without falling down; a no small feat I should call it, and one to give me relief, since for the while it lasted I was held on tenter-hooks over Peg's safety, and would hover about ready to rush in and save her should affairs go badly between Ingham and the glass-like floor.

There occurred one incident of harshness I could have wished left out. It was when that Frau Huygens drew up to Peg and would greet her as though there were no such name as Krudener and no such story as the slight she cast on Peg in the Russian's dining room. The gross Frau Huygens was arrayed in her

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

one garish frock of many colors, and which her prudence to save money and buy no more frocks had made so well known.

Frau Huygens, trained to the venture, doubtless, by her husband, who still dwelt in fear of Van Buren and those passports which should return him to the Hague, swept before Peg with the grace of a cabbage on parade. When Peg, in response to her greeting, was silent and would only look on her in a baffled manner, as though her memory were at bay, Frau Huygens exclaimed, with a Dutch thick-ness of reproach which no one might imitate with a pen:

“Madam, don’t you remember me?”

“Well, then,” said Peg, as one who makes every polite effort and yet fails, “I remember your dress very well, but your face is strange to me.”

With that I swooped on Peg and whisked her away, for I had a horror of what might follow.

“And there,” cried Peg, with an unctuous gurgle, “was it not a best of fortunes, watch-dog, that she should give me that opportunity? Now we are quits; and I think, too, I have her in my debt.”

There was nothing to be said to this, and

I made myself content with thoughts of how we were no worse off.

Late one afternoon when the hour was drawing towards the close of the day, I had planted myself at a window and was looking across to the President's Square, and, since her gables were of necessity in the corner of my eye, carrying Peg vaguely on my meditations. It had been a still, windless day of the early spring, but, for all it stood so late of the season, with a heaviness in the air that smelled of snow.

Now I am not one readily to be borne upon by imps in blue, and would commonly give you the reason of my gloomy mood, if gloom I were a spoil to. But this was the day odd for me, since I was pressed hard with a sense of disaster and the feeling as of some threat in the air like a knife, that I liked not at all and understood still less. What was it to so hang upon me like a millstone or a sibyl-spoken prophecy of death? I would try to laugh it down; but the smile I wrung from my unwilling lips owned so much of bitterness that in mere defence I surrendered myself to a pensive resignation instead, as being of two evils the lesser one, and so paused for what

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

blow might descend upon me. Some disaster pended, of that my spirit went convinced; and I folded my hands and waited for the future to announce its name.

While I was thus by the window it began to snow. It was of your left-over storms which have been held captive in caverns of the clouds, to at last escape and overtake the world a month or more behind the proper time. There was no stir to the air, and the day went still and moderate; and yet I never looked on such a fall of snow, with flakes big and soft as a baby's hands. Even as I gazed, the ground under my eyes turned from a new spring green to white, while the trees across were snow from roots to very finger-tips, and showed in milky fretwork against the low dullness of the sky.

As I stood watching these white changes in the face of things—for the spectacle would charm me like mesmerism and made me forget my forebodes—the General laid a gentle hand upon my shoulder. This, too, had its side to startle, for the General, while as tender as a woman, was in nowise demonstrative, and not one to be patting your shoulder or slapping your back.

In dim fashion those thin fingers would add themselves to that threat of sadness, and stir a new alarm inside my bosom.

"What is it?" I asked, as though he solicited my notice to something urgent or unusual; "what should it be now?"—my voice not firm but tremulous.

The General looked on me with an affectionate, consolatory eye, and yet, somehow, his glance would fit in ominously with my feeling. I could tell how I stood at the point of bad tidings.

And at that he began far enough away, for his first words were of the long ago.

"I was thinking," said he, "of that time my horse was shot and pinned me by the leg in the fight on the Tombigbee. Do you recall how you sprang from your saddle and flung the dying horse aside as though you but hefted a rabbit?"

"When it comes to that," I returned, "I supposed that you as well as your horse were shot down, and the fear gave me a flash of strength."

The General was silent, his hand still on my shoulder. Then he began again, musingly.

"We must ever be together, Major," said he; "we must stay together to the last. I shall die first; I am eighteen years nearer the grave than you and shall go on ahead. It is you—I look to you for this—it is you who must be by my side to close my eyes. We must never

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

part; we are lonely men and lonesome men, and shall make no new friends. We must be for that the closer to each other."

Now, even through my clouds, these words would strike me as lacking object or coherency. What should be the matter? Was there some wrong with him or with me? He had not spoken in this vein even when he lay in the vale of death.

"Why," said I, "there is no present need to talk on death, thank God! Why should you talk on death?"

"It was not death but you, I had on my mind," he replied. "I would never be parted from you."

"Nor shall you," I declared; "although I should count the absence of myself no loss to you or any one."

This was not it; what would he be about?

"Well, let us put aside dole," cried he, cheering himself with an effort; "now folk would call us two fortunate, I warrant you, to be looking from a White House window upon a world all ours. Come, we will have a brisker view; I have great news for you, and news to make you stare. Nor will I beat about the bush, but go to the heart at once. I am about to dissolve my cabinet."

"What!" I exclaimed, for here was a thing without a precedent.

"My cabinet is to dissolve. I have arranged for it. Van Buren will tender his resignation as of his own desire; Eaton and Barry will follow suit. If Calhoun's three do not take the hint and act on so good an example, then I will bring them to book with a demand. I will say that, half of my cabinet being gone, I desire to sweep clean the site and rear up in its place a new edifice of counsel."

My thoughts were in a tumult, and the blood in me seemed seized of riot. It was a strange thing, that from the moment the General's hand fell upon my shoulder it seemed to hold Peg before my eyes. And when he talked it was as though he spoke her name with every word.

"Yes," he went on, "Van Buren's resignation will be in my hands to-morrow; Eaton's soon as he returns from Baltimore, say in a week; then Barry's will come along in the wake of Eaton's. I shall send Van Buren Minister to England. He shall be Vice-President for my second term, as you and I have planned, and President after that."

"But Peg," cried I, at last; "what will you do with Peg?"

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

The General would try to smile at this, but the effort was as futile as had been my own. But he did not fence at me with any jesting reminder of how Peg was no part of his cabinet; he met my thought squarely and would make allowance for my feeling.

"It is most natural," he returned, "that you should ask of Peg. We have guarded our little girl too long—you and I—not to own her first in our concern. Peg, then, shall go to Florida and be a queen. I shall give Eaton that Governorship; we may yet need a firm hand in St. Augustine. Is it not a good thought? Our Peg shall rule among those Spaniards; it will almost be to have a throne and wear a crown. Does not that please you, when now her station under kinder skies is to be so splendid and so notably enhanced?"

From him I turned and paced the room; then from sadness my anger began to swell, for I am one whose grief runs with the end of it into wrath.

"Tell me one thing," cried I at last, pausing before the General. "Why do you dissolve your cabinet?"

"Will it not lop off three arms of Calhoun's power?" he asked. "Does it not palsy Branch and Ingham and Berrien?"

"But is that the true reason?" I demanded.

"It is the one I shall let the world believe, at any rate."

"That should be no answer," I retorted, my heart like a furnace with the rage that was coming over me. "Why do you palter? I have the right to know. You have made your dozen poor jests upon me, and said I was in love with Peg. Perhaps you would mean those jests. I tell you I do not believe your word when you say it is a move against Calhoun. That is mere glamour and fallacy and meant for blindness. It is no tale to tell me as though I were some common gull. Give me your reason, then—the true one. Does Eaton know he is to go?"

All this I reeled off, and gave the General no opening for an answer, asking a dozen questions at once. But he sat quiet and with a friendly patience, and his face spoke to me only of nearness and sympathy, and never a shade of hurt for the rudeness I visited upon him. What a heart of gold was his! He, who bore nothing from an enemy, would bear all at the hands of a friend.

When I was run out of queries he began to take me up, beginning at the end.

"Eaton knows," said he; "he knew before he left for Baltimore. For him the change will be a relief; his has been no bed of flowers, and in St. Augustine his place and

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

power, and last, not least, his peace, will gain promotion."

"Doubtless," said I, in a high pitch of scorn, "he can there flaunt his riches in the faces of the Dons, and show Peg's beauty, and make a vast display."

"You interrupt me," remarked the General. "However let me ask a question: Why do you remind me how I've jested and mayhap made some idle laugh between us, and as innocent as idle, over your feeling for the little girl? Why do you put that to me?"

"Because," said I, in a fury, "I think you break up your cabinet for that. You will have it how Peg is in some peril of me; you would send Peg to Florida on a pretense to make her safe from me. There you have it. You see I can be the honester and the franker man. I pass you my heart on a spear."

The General arose from the chair into which he had flung himself, and taking me by the two shoulders, would look on me squarely, while I in my turn must gaze into his gray depths. I could see the tears stand in his fine eyes.

"Let me tell you one thing," said he. "I but repeat what you know as well as I, when I say that should you harbor thought of Peg, or look on her in lights other than as the wife of

a friend, it would be black disgrace to yourself and to me, and most of all to Peg. And do you think I would not trust you? Man, I need no sentry over you save the sentry of your own conscience, no guard other than the guard your honor sets. You would do no wrong to Peg. It is not you I fear; on your faith I would stake my soul's hope of a meeting I look and long for after death. Will you have my reason now for what I do? It is not to save Peg from you; it is to save Peg from Peg, she goes to Florida. And to save our Peg I'd break a dozen cabinets."

It was now grown dark, and the silent storm swept down more whitely dense than before. I threw a heavy military cloak about me and stepped out into the night. I had no set purpose, no destination; but some sure influence tugged at me, and then the house would seem to choke and its heat to smother me; I wanted the darkness and the coolness and to be alone. Was it some sweet power beckoning my heart, or merely a plain instinct to save and recover myself, one that any hard-struck animal might have had, to thus take me forth into the midst of the blinding storm?

My journey through the gathering drifts was not pushed far when, under one of the oil lamps that flanked the road and shed a sickly

HOW PEG WAS SAVED FROM PEG

flare through the thick-falling snow, I beheld a closed carriage drawn up. It was one of those vehicles of hire common of the place, and beyond being better than most, and with two powerful horses that would have looked well hauling a gun in a battery, nothing to mark it. At first glance I thought it had come by some mishap to running gear or axle-tree.

As I was for pushing by, quite heedless of the stalled carriage and thinking only on my own broken heart, some one plucked me by the cloak. Wheeling sharply, I saw it was the coachman who had leaped from his box to interrupt me.

There would be no mistaking the massive shoulders and easy pose; it was Rivera.

"What's this?" said I. "When did you turn whip?"

Rivera gave me no words, but motioning towards the carriage, swung again to his place with the reins. As he did so, there came a tap on the glass.

Somewhat in a maze, I approached and flung open the door. In the dark depths I made out the vague outlines of a woman.

"Get in." It was Peg's voice.

Without demur or question I took my place beside her and shut the door; with that, Rivera cracking a thong over the sleepy horses

P E G G Y O ' N E A L

to rouse them, the carriage at a slow pace began moving Georgetown way.

"Hold me close to you," whispered Peg, her low tones falling on my ears like a cry of pain, "hold me close to you; I am cold."

CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW.

As though in a dream I took Peg in under my great cloak, and having my arm about her would now hold her close and warm to my side. Her ear was over my heart as her face lay pressed against me, and I only hope she could understand the story of that throbbing.

For myself I was in a mid-swirl of mere confusion, with my wits all upside down, and no clear notion of what I did or why. The General's word of that Florida business, the cabinet to break and Peg to go away from me, made it for the moment as though the floor of the world had given way beneath my feet. It would provoke chaos and seem the end of things.

It was never said of me, even by the least informed, that I would be swayed in any kind or made to pause in what I went about by the counsel of conventionality. I had lived a life half-bitted, and for the main with bridle on my neck; the last I cared for were the frowns or the smiles of folk. If it were a woman to talk against the teeth of my fancy, I would

turn my back on her; if a man, I had a way to gag his tongue if it should be no better than the butt of my pistol. And yet, however loose my habit or dull my knowledge of those matters, I did not go without a fashion of cold shock on Peg's behalf when I was so far my own man again as to dwell on our position—we, plodding through the snow and the darkness, locked in that carriage.

This mood of apprehension was so much in the upper-hand with me that it came to be the impulse, and would suggest the topic I laid tongue to when first I found my words. It was not without a mighty effort of the will that I obliged myself to some steadiness of utterance. Then, and not very craftily, I might observe, I, in the manner of one who thinks aloud, and surely as much to myself as to Peg, gave vent to an exclamation under my breath. Indeed, I would not have looked for Peg to hear me, since her head—pretty ears and all—was buried beneath the thick folds of my cloak.

“What if folk were to know!” I said.

Then came Peg's voice like a half stifled murmur of despair.

“What should I care who knows?” cried she. “It is my heart's funeral! My heart is dead and we go upon its funeral in this snow!”

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW

At that, without well heeding what I was about, and doubtless drawn to it by the note of woe in Peg's tones, I held her to my side even more closely than before. Thus we remained for a long space in utter silence, neither speaking a word, while the quiet storm stole down upon us and the slow wheels forced their passage through the white cold levels of the snow.

After a bit, Peg's head, curls in a tangle and hood removed, was thrust outside my cloak, which garment, however, she would continue to wrap about her and hold with her hand.

"I would still be near to you," she said, as though in explanation of the cloak, "though I am no longer cold."

The mere truth was, the night, while a choke and smother of snow, was nothing chill, being bare freezing for a temperature and never a breath of air to stir, and the inside of the big carriage as warm as many a library. And yet, when I would first get in, I found Peg shivering as with an ague. That was gone now and she more in control.

Peg would now be more mistress of herself and speak with a measure of firmness.

"You have heard?" she asked.

"The General," I returned, "has told me

you are to go to Florida. But how should y have been told? Or was it known to you long?"

This latter I put a little viciously, for struck me on the moment how Peg might ha been aware of this new destiny for days, a hidden it from me. But no; she had come her information but an hour before. Eve while the General with his hand on my rebellious shoulder gave me the story of it, the letter which told the news to Peg was put withi her hands.

"It was to have been a secret," said she "and my husband would have kept it until hi return. But he will be detained beyond hi plans; he wrote me because of preparation I must make."

While Peg said this, her face was held up towards mine, and even in the vague lights which were rather the ghosts of lights than any radiance however dim, I could catch some whiteness of it.

Suddenly her head was in its old resting place over my heart, with the cloak to again become its cover.

"Watch-dog," whispered Peg, and I might tell how deeply she was stricken by the quaver of her voice, as much as by a trembling that swept her as a gust rumples

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW

the surface of a tarn; "watch-dog, I felt that I would not live unless I saw you. Do you contemn me? Do you own shame for your little friend? I could not help it; I sent for Rivera, and made him fetch this carriage. We are alone—hidden from the world's eyes. I have torn a night from the hands of Time to be no one's night save ours. I waited by the lamp; my soul called to you and I knew you would come. I would not send; I was sure you would be with me without that. I should have died if I had not found you. Say that I did right, watch-dog. Say that it was right! I only cry for your one word; what others will think or say I care not, but I could not bear up against your anger! Say that I did right; say it!—say that you are glad."

"I will say it all and intend it all, my little one!" Here I stroked Peg's tangle of curls as one would pet a child.

My whole being was wrapped in a storm and my bosom caged a whirlwind. I could be calm enough, apparently, and yet I was growing aware of that tempest of spirit which shook me like an aspen. I had been dull—dull to the point of crime; but now my wisdom would begin to sharpen and brighten itself.

Still, I had so much coolness to call my own that I was glad of the fact of Rivera. I

remember thinking on that; for, with no more words than the dumb, he was as secret as a mole and as honest, withal, and single-hearted as a hound. There would be none to know; as Peg said, she had torn a night from eternity to be ours and ours alone.

While these thoughts went tumbling down the steeps of my conjecturings, I continued mechanically to caress Peg's hair, and it felt like a web of gossamer in my coarse fingers.

"Contemn you, child!" said I, and my voice was not much louder than had been hers, and I bent down my head so that she might hear; "contemn you! I would as soon impeach the snow outside, new given from the sky, denouncing it for soot."

Peg began to weep, and I could hear the sharp catching of her sobs. Suddenly the moan came sighing up to me:

"Oh, if there were no such word as right or justice or duty, but only love—just love!"

Then with a quick backward twist of her form that was like an impulse, and as replete of a swift grace as any suppleness of that long ago leopard whereof she would so often make me think, Peg turned herself in my arms, and with her own encircling my neck lay crying on my bosom. I held her close—closer. I could tell the beating of her heart, count the foot-

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW

falls of her nature as though she were parcel of myself. How I loved her! adored her!—my prone spirit would fall on its knees to her for its Deity.

The while, too, and with my soul at these prayers, my candor would arrest me for the traitor I was. Where should be that conscience the General spoke on? Or where that honor which was to have been as a sentry to check my strayings? That honor was recreant where love would take the field against it; that conscience was so much apostate of the right it would frame an argument of equity and claim superior liberty for superior love, and be all for carrying Peg away. My boasted manhood was a rope of sand!

Even now, as weary-white with years I tell this tale of dead and other days, I yet wonder upon that discovery of myself. This was what I beheld: I had loved Peg from the start; the General's jest was sober truth. I would worship her, and then cheat myself with lie and sophistry to hide my villainy against my own detection. And now when the mask was fallen and I stood face to face with the true image of my infamy, would I still press forward to my sins? Or would I think on the good General, and the pain and the foul stain for each of us which I was about to compass?

It was this to run in my mind, but all in a dimmest way to be imagined, and as though it were a dream and nothing true. As bonds to stay me, these thoughts came to be no more than packthreads; as props to uphold me, trembling to a fall, they proved the merest reeds to lean on. With Peg cradled in my arms, her heart beating on my own, she filled out the world for me and thrust all else beyond the frontier of my outmost hope or fear. I wanted only Peg, would heed no other call, and whether it were right or wrong or black or white I cared not. Caught fast in the mills, I was wholly ground between Peg and my mighty love for her. In a supreme egotism and the selfishness that goes wanting heart or conscience, I would set torch to the skies before I gave her up.

It is the fair wellhead of amazement how a man is thus strange to himself; how he will defeat his own best prophecy and be as opposite as night and day to all he promised. Folk have never accounted me weak, and I myself would have said I was a man of stone. I have been described for one of resolution. I have spurred my horse across the front of beaten troops, terror-whipped and in retreat. I've ridden against them, and with word and point of sword forced them to a halt. I've wheeled

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW

them, and, since they would not go without, driven them back like sheep; and then, when they would be of a braver hope, taken their lead and whirled them like lions upon the foe they lately fled from, and won a battle with them. And now I, who was granite in the face of men, had only a will of water for this girl who wept across my heart.

"Take me away!" she cried; "oh, take me away!"

Then it was my love swept down upon her like a strong wind. I take shame to repeat what I said. Bluntly I would disregard all claims, forfeit honor, forget the General and defy the rest; we would wander to new regions, she and I, and set up our idol of blind love. Carried by my soul's wish, I would leave her nothing untold; I would bow down at her feet and beg of her to come with me.

As I spoke, Peg would seem to turn more calm and comforted. She did not withdraw from my arms, but rested in them like a child. And yet there arose a sad steadfastness to wrap her about that was a check and a bar to me.

"Watch-dog," said Peg at last, and her manner was the manner of one who grieves, "watch-dog, I am a wicked woman. I live my life backward, and it would be as though I

could not help or save myself. My feet tak hold on baseness, and my hands spin evil fo those who do me good. My touch is a dark ness—a palsy—a death. Oh, why was I born! Peg wailed ; “why was I sent to destroy th ones I love!”

Not a word would now come to me. I was silenced and sat like one convicted, wait ing sentence. But that cold thought stil crept about my heart like a snake. I would—I must have Peg ; I would give my share in God to make her mine!

“What should be the wrong in me?” Peg went on. “Knowing the right from the left, I take ever the left hand turning ; seeing good and evil, I choose the bad, and there rises a black glory in my heart like a cloud of pleas ant sin to swallow up repentance. Oh, if I might only tame myself to an appearance of right and be a hypocrite when I may not be a saint!”

Peg was presently better restored to her self. In the very moment when the gates of my soul would open to let it forth to her and I gave myself into her hands to be fashioned by her as she would, Peg began to gather steadiness. It was she to now think and speak and decide for both of us ; for myself, I was clean swept away. I was not to know this new

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW

strength of Peg's from her tones alone, or the trend of what she uttered; I could feel her heart-throbs become firmer and more slow as she lay in my arms, and it was in them I read the truth of her resolve.

"Watch-dog," said Peg in a way most sweetly solemn, "I think nothing of myself. If it were I alone to be unmade, I'd never leave your arms again. Come weal, come woe, here would I bide, and while your arms were round me the worst would change to be the best. But I will not see you under the mire of men's tongues. Dear one, you would die! You are one whose life grows on his honor like a flower on its stem; disgrace would cut you down and you would die. And yet, I am glad I love you; I am glad I care nothing for myself. Let my fate be woven to me coarse as sackcloth, harsh as nettles, yet will I exult while I draw its folds about me. I will go on as a world would say I should; and if the way of life lie steep, I'll still climb on and think I toil for you; and if it be stony and if it bruise my feet, I'll say I suffer that to keep you safe; I'll make my grief my Eden and find in the endless woe of your surrender a nobler, higher, more immortal transport than would have owned me in your arms. And there will be another world!" Peg's tones swung low to

my ear, and mystical. "Watch-dog, there be lives after this."

Peg was silent for a space, and would turn even and cool and in a way of content. I, on my part, might neither say her yea nor nay, for I was in the hollow of her hand like a pebble to be retained or cast by her into the sea as she should conclude.

And somehow I was no longer in the dark. I loved her; and yet I knew Peg was not to be for me; she had said the word; she would go and I would stay; for all her soft beauty and that love for me which spoke in every fiber of her being, the truth flowed in on me like a tide that in no way might I change her or shape her or move her from her will. Against my prayer and in the front of protest, I would be saved to myself and I would lose her; she would do it all. What was it the General said? He would save Peg from Peg? It was she who now would save me from both herself and me when my love-sown madness was hot to make a wreck of all.

"Yes, watch-dog," Peg continued dreamily, "there will come another life." Then of the suddenest twining her arms about my neck more tightly still and until she clung there like a part of me, she cried out as though her soul

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW

spoke: "Kiss me, sweetheart; kiss me, if it be but once. This night at least is ours."

It was she who would command. I grew drunken on her lips while my thoughts would stray and stagger. I could know nothing, act nothing, be nothing save as she would have me. Her hot arms were as the arms of summer torrents to hurry me along; her lips were like the lips of a whirlpool! It was a kiss—a kiss of the infinite—and would lay its velvet touch upon the ultimate reason of existence.

And so Peg went away; and for my portion I took up my old life, which now was as dark and chill and hollow as a cave.

Now what should there be more to tell? What matters it how secession hid its head? or how Calhoun resigned his Vice-Presidency to later creep back to a seat in that Senate where he had sat on high and ruled? or how the General fought and slew the Bank? Who is there to care for the story of the General's re-election, when Van Buren came with him for the second place? Who, I say, would bend the ear of interest to such tales as those when now our Peg was gone?

The General never again took up with me that matter of his Cabinet and its dissolution,

and how he scattered it to save Peg from herself. One evening, however, as he smoked and I sat bitter and listless, I plumped a question at him.

"If it were to save Peg from Peg," said I, "why did you defer so long? Why did not you disperse your Cabinet months before? Or was it that you failed to note Peg's peril of herself till just before you acted?" This last with a great sneer.

"It was plain to me from the beginning how Peg was won to you," said he.

"Then, in the beginning why did not you act?"

"How could I? Peg was under fire for her fair repute. Had I broken up my Cabinet, it would have been Peg's death blow. Folk would have told how it was for the war upon her and because she could not be defended. No, I must give her time for triumph; that achieved, the rest might happen and she be made secure in Florida. It was the one trail, and I followed it." The General came over to my chair. "Old comrade," said he with a world of goodness in his manner, "if I have thrust a thorn in your heart, forgive me. If friendship can cure, that thorn will be plucked away."

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW

On another day the General was in a temper for abstract philosophies. It lay in a hot time of summer and his moods flowed lazily. His fancy would run away to the topic of woman and her helplessness.

"Beautiful and sweet, she is," he was saying, "and a blessing, too; but the man must ever bear upon his mind her weakness, and be her buckler even from herself. He must be on guard for both. For she is as a child, and nowise deep nor fortified of any rooted strength. Your man, on the other hand, while wanting those traits of beauty which shine forth in woman like the stars at night, is withal safe enough. He is cold like an iceberg, and like an iceberg he rides steadily throughout every gale with nine-tenths of him beneath the sea. Your tempest can go no deeper than the surface; it cannot search the ocean's depths, and so the man swims safely."

Where the General would have brought up in these tongue-wanderings one may only guess. He was never to finish, for in a flurry of irritation I interrupted him.

"Now let me tell you one thing," said I, wheeling on him with a sort of venom; "to my mind, your man is a dullish fool of neither bones nor brains, and your woman has nothing to fear from him."

"What's that?" cried the General, startled into letting fall his pipe; "what do I hear you say?"

"And more," I went on; "your man will do whatever your woman commands. He will go or stay, or fetch or carry, or weep or laugh, or live or die by the least breath of her lips. Your man is mere clay; your woman is the potter to mould him and bake him and break him in form and fashion and fragment as shall best flatter her caprice or most nicely match the color of her fancy. For virtue, your man is a toad and your woman that blossom by which he crouches. For power, your woman is the wind, while your man is that poor scrap of nothing to be tossed thereon."

"You are a cynic," retorted the General with a snort, and after surveying me for a moment with a warlike eye he sauntered away for another pipe.

"Your woman must save herself," cried I, as he went through the door. "At all events, if she have nothing stronger than your man to lean on, her case is lost and desolate indeed."

"You-all is plumb kerrect, Marse Major," said Jim, who as usual had been listening with flattering interest while the General and I discussed; "you-all is plumb right. Man an' woman is jes' like a candle; he's d'taller, she's

LOVE'S FUNERAL IN THE SNOW

d'wick. D'Marse General is a pow'ful fine soger an' all that, but he shore don't know enough 'bout women folks to wad a gun."

One day I got a little note from Peg. It was as though I held a sunbeam in my fingers; I kissed it while my heart put up a prayer. Thus it ran:

"So, Watch-dog:—They have taken me and left you, and there be miles between. Wherefore I feel very safe and very sad. It is all birds and blossoms and trees and sunshine and bright days and sorrow here. I came away in such a tumult of hurry I left many things behind. Most of them I can do without, but I mislaid my love, and that grows to be a sore distress. Here where I should need it I'm without it; there, where mayhap it lies unregarded and uncared for, it can give me no good but only pain. You may find it—my poor love!—since it should be something close to you. It may be lying at your feet while you read this. Should you come across it, even though you be in the art and press of president making, don't forget to lift it up and save it and keep it warm upon your heart for sake of little Peg. But I must cure me of this abject strain; I too much beg where I should give commands. For are you not my slave? Look if the small white mark of vassalage be not upon your hand! Do you find it? Yes? Read it, then, and re-read it with your heart! Do you know the promise it would tell you? By the sign of that white mark my tooth made, it is given that now or then, or here or there, or in this life or in that, your Peg will yet lay hands of love upon her slave."

That was the last letter as it was the first—the last word from my lost and vanished Peg. I have that letter by me as I write; it is yellow and worn and stained and blistered as though with tears. That was my last word

from her, I say. And now when the winter of my days lies thick and white and cold upon me, and those whom I loved are gone, while those to come and go before me are strangers whose very names are strange, I wend often to Peg's grave. There where the great stone fits down above her, and resting myself upon that stone—there, by the door of death, I muse upon the past. I kiss the stone above Peg—cold it is, cold as my age-chilled lips! And I think on the time that was, with its hot lights to dazzle and blind and make drunk the heart with the red splendors of them; and on the time that will be—a shadow-land of unformed wonders! Then will my old eyes come to search among the wrinkles for that small white mark on my hand which Peg's loving leopard teeth ordained, and I feel again that snow-storm kiss, while my hope, for a prayer, recites Peg's bond to yet lay hands of love upon her slave.

THE END.

Acme
Bookbinding Co., Inc.
200 Summer Street
Boston 10, Mass.

3 2044 044 495 448

**THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED
AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS
NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON
OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED
BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE
NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE
BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.**

**Harvard College Widener Library
Cambridge, MA 02138 (617) 495-2413**



